ABE and MAWRUSS

MONTAGUE GLASS

THIS CAME FROM
CITY DRUG STORE,
CARROLLTON, OHIO.

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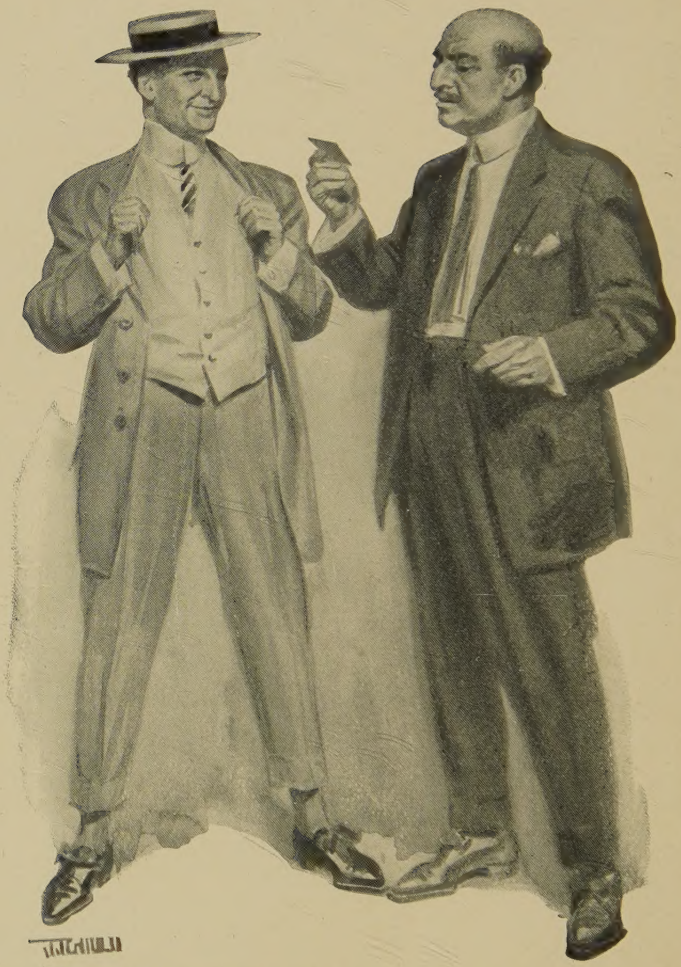

"If a feller wants to make a success in business he should be a little up to date, ain't it?"

ABE AND MAWRUSS

Being Further Adventures of Potash and Perlmutter

BY MONTAGUE GLASS

ILLUSTRATED BY
J. J. GOULD AND MARTIN JUSTICE

New York
GROSSET & DUNLAP
Publishers

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COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

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ABE AND MAWRUSS

CHAPTER ONE

SYMPATHY

I COME down on the subway with Max Linkheimer this morning, Mawruss," Abe Potash said to his partner, Morris Perlmutter, as they sat in the showroom one hot July morning. "That feller is a regular philantropist."

"I bet yer," Morris replied. "He would talk a tin ear on to you if you only give him a chance. Leon Sammet too, Abe, I assure you. I seen Leon in the Harlem Winter Garden last night, and the goods he sold while he was talking to me and Barney Gans, Abe, in two seasons we don't do such a business. Yes, Abe; Leon Sammet is just such another one of them fellers like Max Linkheimer."

"What d'ye mean — 'such another one of them fellers like Max Linkheimer'?" Abe repeated. "Between Leon Sammet and Max Linkheimer is the difference like day from night. Max Linkheimer is one fine man, Mawruss."

Morris shrugged. "I didn't say he wasn't,"

he rejoined. "All I says was that Leon Sammet is another one of them philantro fellers too, Abe. Talks you deef, dumb and blind."

Abe rose to his feet and stared indignantly at his partner.

"I don't know what comes over you lately, Mawruss," he cried. "Seemingly you don't understand the English language at all. A philantropist ain't a *schmooser*, Mawruss."

"I know he ain't, Abe; but just the same Max Linkheimer is a feller which he got a whole lot too much to say for himself. Furthermore, Abe, my Minnie says Mrs. Linkheimer tells her Max ain't home a single night neither, and when a man neglects his family like that, Abe, I ain't got no use for him at all."

"That's because he belongs to eight lodges," Abe replied. "There ain't a single Sunday neither which he ain't busy with funerals too, Mawruss."

"Is that so?" Morris retorted. "Well, if I would be in the button business, Abe, I would be a philantropist too. A feller's got to belong to eight lodges if he's in the button business, Abe, because otherwise he couldn't sell no goods at all."

Abe continued:

"Linkheimer ain't looking to sell goods to lodge brothers, Mawruss. He's too old established a business for that. He's got a heart too, Mawruss. Why the money that feller spends on charity, Maw-

russ, you wouldn't believe at all. He told me so himself. Always he tries to do good. Only this morning, Mawruss, he was telling me about a young feller by the name Schenkmann which he is trying to find a position for as stock clerk. Nobody would take the young feller on, Mawruss, because he got into trouble with a house in Dallas, Texas, which they claim the young feller stole from them a hundred dollars, Mawruss. But Linkheimer says how if you would give a dawg a bad name, Mawruss, you might just as well give him to the dawgcatcher. So Linkheimer is willing to take a chance on this here feller Schenkmann, and he gives him a job in his own place."

"Dawgs I don't know nothing about at all, Abe," Morris commented. "But I would be willing to give the young feller a show too, Abe, if I would only got plain bone and metal buttons in stock. But when you carry a couple hundred pieces silk goods, Abe, like we do, then that's something else again."

"Well, Mawruss, *Gott sei dank* we don't got to get a new shipping clerk. Jake has been with us five years now, Mawruss, and so far what I could see he ain't got ambition enough to ask for a raise even, let alone look for a better job."

"You shouldn't congradulate yourself too quick, Abe," Morris replied. "Ambition he's got it plenty, but he ain't got the nerve. We really ought to give

the feller a raise, Abe. I mean it. Every time I go near him at all he gives me a look, and the first thing you know, Abe, he would be leaving us."

"Looks we could stand it, Mawruss; but if we would start in giving him a raise there would be no end to it at all. *Lass's bleiben.* If the feller wants a raise, Mawruss, he should ask for it."

Barely two weeks after the conversation above set forth, however, Jake entered the firm's private office and tendered his resignation.

"Mr. Perlmutter," he said, "I'm going to leave."

"Going to leave?" Morris cried. "What d'ye mean — going to leave?"

"Going to leave?" Abe repeated crescendo. "An idea! You should positively do nothing of the kind."

"It wouldn't be no more than you deserve, Jake, if we would fire you right out of the store," Morris added. "You work for us here five years and then you come to us and say you are going to leave. Did you ever hear of such a thing? If you want it a couple dollars more a week, we would give it to you and *fartig.* But if you get fresh and come to us and tell us you are going to leave, y'understand, then that's something else again."

"Moost I work for you if I don't want to?" Jake asked.

"'S enough, Jake," Abe said. "We heard enough from you already."

"All right, Mr. Potash," he replied. "But just the same I am telling you, Mr. Potash, you should look for a new shipping clerk, as I bought it a candy, cigar and stationery store on Lenox Avenue, and I am going to quit Saturday sure."

"Well, Abe, what did I told you?" Morris said bitterly, after Jake had left the office. "For the sake of a couple of dollars a week, Abe, we are losing a good shipping clerk."

Abe covered his embarrassment with a mirthless laugh.

"Good shipping clerks you could get any day in the week, Mawruss," he said. "We ain't going to go out of business exactly, y'understand, just because Jake is leaving us. I bet yer if we would advertise in to-morrow morning's paper we would get a dozen good shipping clerks."

"Go ahead, advertise," Morris grunted. "This is your idee Jake leaves us, Abe, and now you should find somebody to take his place. I'm sick and tired making changes in the store."

"Always kicking, Mawruss, always kicking!" Abe retorted. "By Saturday I bet yer we would get a hundred good shipping clerks already."

But Saturday came and went, and although in the meantime old and young shipping clerks of every degree of uncleanliness passed in review before Abe and Morris, none of them proved acceptable.

"All right, Abe," Morris said on the Monday morning after Jake had gone, "you done enough about this here shipping clerk business. Give me a show. I ain't got such liberal idees about shipping clerks as you got, Abe, but all the same, Abe, I think I could go at this business with a little system, y'understand."

"You shouldn't trouble yourself, Mawruss," Abe replied, with an airy wave of his hand. "I hired one already."

"You hired one already, Abe!" Morris repeated. "Well, ain't I got something to say about it too?"

"Again kicking, Mawruss?" Abe exclaimed. "You yourself told me I should find a shipping clerk, and so I done so."

"Well," Morris cried, "ain't I even entitled to know the feller's name at all?"

"Sure you are entitled to know his name," Abe answered. "He's a young feller by the name of Schenkmann."

"Schenkmann," Morris said slowly. "Schenkmann? Where did I — you mean that feller by the name Schenkmann which he works by Max Linkheimer?"

Abe nodded.

"What's the matter with you, Abe?" Morris cried. "Are you crazy or what?"

"What do you mean am I crazy?" Abe said. "We carry burglary insurance, ain't it? And be-

sides he ain't, Mawruss, Max Linkheimer says, missed so much as a button since the feller worked for him."

"A button," Morris shouted; "let me tell you something, Abe. Max Linkheimer could miss a thousand buttons, and what is it? But with us, Abe, one piece of silk goods is more as a hundred dollars."

"'S all right, Mawruss," Abe interrupted. "Max Linkheimer says we shouldn't be afraid. He says he trusts the young feller in the office with hundreds of dollars laying in the safe, and he ain't touched a cent so far. Furthermore, the young feller's got a wife and baby, Mawruss."

"Well I got a wife and baby too, Abe."

"Sure, I know, Mawruss, and so you ought to got a little sympathy for the feller."

Morris laughed raucously.

"Sure, I know, Abe," he replied. "A good way to lose money in business, Abe, is to got sympathy for somebody. You sell a feller goods, Abe, because he's a new beginner and you got sympathy for him, Abe, and the feller busts up on you. You accommodate a concern with five hundred dollars — a check against their check dated two weeks ahead, Abe — because their collections is slow and you got sympathy for them, and when the two weeks goes by, Abe, the check is N. G. You give a feller out in Kansas City two months an extension because

he done a bad spring business, and you got sympathy for him, and the first thing you know, Abe, a jobber out in Omaha gets a judgment against him and closes him up. And that's the way it goes. If we would hire this young feller because we got sympathy for him, Abe, the least that happens us is that he gets away with a couple hundred dollars' worth of piece goods."

"Max Linkheimer says positively nothing of the kind," Abe insisted. "Max says the feller has turned around a new leaf, and he would trust him like a brother."

"Like a brother-in-law, you mean, Abe," Morris jeered. "That feller Linkheimer never trusted nobody for nothing, Abe. Always by the first of the month comes a statement, and if he don't get a check by the fifth, Abe, he sends another with 'past due' stamped on to it."

"So much the better, Mawruss. If Max Linkheimer don't trust nobody, Mawruss, and he lets this young feller work in his store, Mawruss, then the feller must be O. K. Ain't it?"

Morris rose wearily to his feet.

"All right, Abe," he said. "If Linkheimer is so anxious to get rid of this feller, let him give us a recommendation in writing, y'understand, and I am satisfied we should give this here young Schenkmann a trial. He could only get into us oncet, Abe, so go right over there and see Linkheimer, and if in

writing he would give us a guaranty the feller is honest, go ahead and hire him."

"Right away I couldn't do it, Mawruss," Abe said. "When I left Linkheimer in the subway this morning he said he was going over to Newark and he wouldn't be back till to-night. I'll stop in there the first thing to-morrow morning."

With this ultimatum, Abe proceeded to the back of the loft and personally attended to the shipment of ten garments to a customer in Cincinnati. Under his supervision a stock boy placed the garments in a wooden packing box, and after the first top board was in position Abe took a wire nail and held it 'twixt his thumb and finger point down on the edge of the case. Then he poised the hammer in his right hand and carefully closing one eye he gauged the distance between the upraised hammer and the head of the nail. At length the blow descended, and forthwith Abe commenced to dance around the floor in the newborn agony of a smashed thumb.

It was while he was putting the finishing touches on a bandage that made up in bulk what it lacked in symmetry that Morris entered.

"What's the matter, Abe?" he cried. "Did you hurted yourself?"

Abe transfixed his partner with a malevolent glare.

"No, Mawruss," he said, as he started for the front of the store, "I ain't hurted myself at all.

I'm just tying this here handkerchief on my thumb to remind myself what a fool I got it for a partner."

Morris waited till Abe had nearly reached the door.

"I don't got to tie something on my thumb to remind myself of that, Abe," he said.

Ever since the birth of his son it had seemed to Morris that the Lenox Avenue express service had grown increasingly slow. Nor did the evening papers contain half the interesting news of his early married life, and he could barely wait until the train had stopped at One Hundred and Sixteenth Street before he was elbowing his way to the platform.

On the Monday night of his partner's mishap he made his accustomed dash from the subway station to his home on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street, confident that as soon as his latchkey rattled in the door Mrs. Perlmutter and the baby would be in the hall to greet him; but on this occasion he was disappointed. To be sure the appetizing odour of *gedampftes kalbfleisch* wafted itself down the elevator shaft as he entered the gilt and plaster-porphyry entrance from the street, but when he crossed the threshold of his own apartment the robust wail of his son and heir mingled with the tones of Lina, the Slavic maid. Of Mrs. Perlmutter, however, there was no sign.

"Where's Minnie?" he demanded.

"Mrs. Perlmutter, she go out," Lina announced, "and she ain't coming home yet."

Not since the return from their honeymoon had Minnie failed to be at home to greet her husband on his arrival from business, and Morris was about to telephone a general alarm to police headquarters when the doorbell rang sharply and Mrs. Perlmutter entered. Her hat, whose size and weight ought to have lent it stability, was tilted at a dangerous angle, and beneath its broad brim her eyes glistened with unmistakable tears.

"Minnie *leben*," Morris cried, as he clasped her in his arms, "what is it?"

Sympathy only opened anew the floodgates of Mrs. Perlmutter's emotions, and before she was sufficiently calm to disclose the cause of her distress, the *gedampftes kalbfleisch* gave evidence of its impending destruction by a strong odour of scorching. Hastily Mrs. Perlmutter dried her eyes and ran to the kitchen, so that it was not until the rescued dinner smoked on the dining-room table that Morris learned the reason for his wife's tears.

"Such a room, Morris," Mrs. Perlmutter declared; "like a pigsty, and not a crust of bread in the house. I met the poor woman in the meat market and she tried to beg a piece of liver from that loafer Hirschkein. Not another cent of my money will he ever get. I bought a big piece of steak for her and then I went home with her. Her poor baby, Morris, looked like a little skeleton."

Morris shook his head from side to side and made inarticulate expressions of commiseration through his nose, his mouth being temporarily occupied by about half a pound of luscious veal.

"Her husband has a job for eight dollars a week," she continued, "and they have to live on that."

Morris swallowed the veal with an effort.

"In Russland," he began, "six people ——"

"I know," Mrs. Perlmutter interrupted, "but this is America, and you've got to go around with me right after dinner and see the poor people."

Morris shrugged his shoulders.

"If I must, I must," he said, helping himself to more of the veal stew, "but I could tell you right now, Minnie, I ain't got twenty-five cents in my clothes, so you got to lend me a couple of dollars till Saturday."

"I'll cash a check for you," Mrs. Perlmutter said firmly, and as soon as dinner was concluded Morris drew a check for ten dollars and Mrs. Perlmutter gave him that amount out of her housekeeping money.

It was nearly nine o'clock when Morris and Minnie groped along the dark hallway of a tenement house in Park Avenue. On the iron viaduct that bestrides that deceptively named thoroughfare heavy trains thundered at intervals, and it was only after Morris had knocked repeatedly at the door of a top-floor apartment that its inmates heard the summons above the roar of the traffic without.

"Well, Mrs. Schenkmann," Minnie cried cheerfully, "how's the baby to-night?"

"Schenkmann?" Morris murmured; "Schenkmann? Is that the name of them people?"

"Why, yes," Minnie replied. "Didn't I tell you that? Mrs. Schenkmann, this is my husband. And I suppose this is Mr. Schenkmann."

A tall, gaunt person rose from the soap box that did duty as a chair and ducked his head shyly.

"Schenkmann?" Morris repeated. "You ain't the Schenkmann which he works by Max Linkheimer?"

Nathan Schenkmann nodded and Mrs. Schenkmann groaned aloud.

"*Ai zuris!*" she cried, "for his sorrow he works by Max Linkheimer. Eight dollars a week he is supposed to get there, and Linkheimer makes us live here in his house. Twelve dollars a month we pay for the rooms, lady, and Linkheimer takes three dollars each week from Nathan's money. We couldn't even get dispossessed like some people does and save a month's rent oncet in a while maybe. The rooms ain't worth it, lady, believe me."

"Does Max Linkheimer own this house?" Morris asked.

"Sure, he's the landlord," Mrs. Schenkmann went on. "I am just telling you. For eight dollars a week a man should work! Ain't it a disgrace?"

"Well, why doesn't he get another job?" Morris

inquired; and then, as Mr. and Mrs. Schenkmann exchanged embarrassed looks and hung their heads, Morris blushed.

"What a fine baby!" he cried hurriedly. He chucked the infant under its chin and made such noises with his tongue as are popularly supposed by parents to be of a nature entertaining to very young children. In point of fact the poor little Schenkmann child, with its blue-white complexion, looked more like a cold-storage chicken than a human baby, but to the maternal eye of Mrs. Schenkmann it represented the sum total of infantile beauty.

"God bless you, mister," she said. "I seen you got a good heart, and if you know Max Linkheimer, he must told you why my husband couldn't get another job. He tells everybody, lady, and makes 'em believe he gives my husband a job out of charity. So sure as I got a baby which I hope he would grow up to be a man, lady, my husband never took no money in Dallas. Them people gives him a hundred dollars he should deposit it in the bank, and he went and lost it. If he would stole it he would of gave it to me, lady, because my Nathan is a good man. He ain't no loafer that he should gamble it away."

There was a ring of truth in Mrs. Schenkmann's tones, and as Morris looked at the twenty-eight-years old Nathan, aged by ill nutrition and abuse,

"If he would stole it he would of gave it to me, lady"

his suspicions all dissolved and gave place only to a great pity.

"Don't say no more, Mrs. Schenkmann," he cried; "I don't want to hear no more about it. To-morrow morning your man leaves that loafer Max Linkheimer and comes to work by us for eighteen dollars a week."

Easily the most salient feature of Mr. Max Linkheimer's attire was the I. O. M. A. jewel that dangled from the tangent point of his generous waist line. It had been presented to him by Harmony Lodge, 122, at the conclusion of his term of office as National Grand Corresponding Secretary, and it weighed about eight ounces avoirdupois. Not that the rest of Mr. Linkheimer's wearing apparel was not in keeping, for he affected to be somewhat old-fashioned in his attire, with just a dash of *bonhomie*. This implies that he wore a wrinkled frock coat and low-cut waistcoat. But he had discarded the black string tie that goes with it for a white ready-made bow as being more suitable to the rôle of philanthropist. The *bonhomie* he supplied by not buttoning the two top buttons of his waistcoat.

"Why, hallo, Abe, my boy!" he cried all in one breath, as Abe Potash entered his button warerooms on Tuesday morning; "what can I do for you?"

He seized Abe's right hand in a soft, warm grip,

slightly moist, and continued to hold it for the better part of five minutes.

"I come to see you about Schenkmann," Abe replied. "We decide we would have him come to work by us as a shipping clerk."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Linkheimer, "As I told you the other day, I've just been asked by a lodge I belong to if I could help out a young feller just out of an orphan asylum. He's a big, strong, healthy boy, and he's willing to come to work for half what I'm paying Schenkmann. So naturally I've got to get rid of Schenkmann."

"I wonder you got time to bother yourself breaking in a new beginner," Abe commented.

Linkheimer waggled his head solemnly.

"I can't help it, Abe," he said. "I let my business suffer, but nevertheless I'm constantly giving the helping hand to these poor inexperienced fellows. I assure you it costs me thousands of dollars in a year, but that's my nature, Abe. I'm all heart. When would you want Schenkmann to come to work?"

"Right away, Mr. Linkheimer."

"Very good, I'll go and call him."

He rose to his feet and started for the door.

"Oh, by the way, Abe," he said, as he paused at the threshold, "you know Schenkmann is a married man with a wife and child, and I understand Mrs. Schenkmann is inclined to be extravagant. For

that reason I let him live in a house I own on Park Avenue, and I take out the rent each week from his pay. It's really a charity to do so. The amount is — er — sixteen dollars a month. I suppose you have no objection to sending me four dollars a week out of his wages?"

"Well, I ain't exactly a collecting agency, y'understand," Abe said; "but I'll see what my partner says, and if he's agreeable, I am. Only one thing though, Mr. Linkheimer, my partner bothers the life out of me I should get from you a recommendation."

"I'll give you one with pleasure, Abe," Linkheimer replied; "but it isn't necessary."

He returned to the front of the office and went to the safe.

"Why just look here, Abe," he said. "I have here in the safe five hundred dollars and some small bills which I put in there last night after I come back from Newark. It was money I received the day before yesterday as chairman of the entertainment committee of a lodge I belong to. The safe was unlocked from five to seven last night and Schenkmann was in and out here all that time."

He opened the middle compartment and pulled out a roll of bills.

"You see, Abe," he said, counting out the money, "here it is: one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred and ——"

Here Mr. Linkheimer paused and examined the last bill carefully, for instead of a hundred-dollar bill it was only a ten-dollar bill.

"Well, what d'ye think of that dirty thief?" he cried at last. "That Schenkmann has taken a hundred-dollar bill out of there."

"What?" Abe exclaimed.

"Just as sure as you are sitting there," Linkheimer went on excitedly. "That feller Schenkmann has pinched a hundred-dollar bill on me."

Here his academic English completely forsook him and he continued in the vernacular of the lower East Side.

"Always up to now I have kept the safe locked on that feller, and the very first time I get careless he goes to work and does me for a hundred dollars yet."

"But," Abe protested, "you might of made a mistake, ain't it? If the feller took it a hundred dollars, why don't he turn around and *ganver* the other four hundred? Ain't it? The ten dollars also he might of took it. What?"

"A *ganef* you couldn't tell what he would do at all," Linkheimer rejoined, and Abe rose to his feet.

"I'm sorry for you, Mr. Linkheimer," he said, seizing his hat, "but I guess I must be getting back to the store. So you shouldn't trouble yourself about this here feller Schenkmann. We decided we would get along without him."

But Abe's words fell on deaf ears, for as he turned

to leave Mr. Linkheimer threw up the window sash and thrust his head out.

"Po-lee-eece, po–lee–eece!" he yelled.

When Abe arrived at his place of business after his visit to Max Linkheimer he found Morris whistling cheerfully over the morning mail.

"Well, Abe," Morris cried, "did you seen it Max Linkheimer?"

Abe hurriedly took off his hat and coat, and catching the bandaged thumb in the sleeve lining he swore long and loud.

"Yes, I seen Max Linkheimer," he growled, "and I'm sick and tired of the whole business. Go ahead and get a shipping clerk, Mawruss. I'm through."

"Why?" Morris asked. "Wouldn't Linkheimer give a recommendation, because if he wouldn't, Abe, I am satisfied we should take the feller without one. In fact I'm surprised you didn't bring him along."

"You are, hey?" Abe broke in. "Well, you shouldn't be surprised at nothing like that, Mawruss, because I didn't bring him along for the simple reason, Mawruss, I don't want no *ganef* working round my place. That's all."

"What do you mean — *ganef*?" Morris cried. "The feller ain't no more a thief as you are, Abe."

Abe's moustache bristled and his eyes bulged so indignantly that they seemed to rest on his cheeks.

"You should be careful what you say, Mawruss," he retorted. "Maybe he ain't no more a *ganef* as I am, Mawruss, but just the same, he is in jail and I ain't."

"In jail," Morris exclaimed. "What for in jail?"

"Because he stole from Linkheimer a hundred dollars yesterday, Mawruss, and while I was there yet, Linkheimer finds it out. So naturally he makes this here feller arrested."

"Yesterday, he stole a hundred dollars?" Morris interrupted.

"Yesterday afternoon," Abe repeated. "With my own eyes I seen it the other money which he didn't stole."

"Then," Morris said, "if he stole it yesterday afternoon, Abe, he didn't positively do nothing of the kind."

Forthwith he related to Abe his visit to Schenkmann's rooms and the condition of poverty that he found.

"I give you my word, Abe," he said, "the feller didn't got even a chair to sit on."

"What do you know, Mawruss, what he got and what he didn't got?" Abe rejoined impatiently. "The feller naturally ain't going to show you the hundred dollars which he stole it — especially,

Mawruss, if he thinks he could work you for a couple dollars more."

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," Morris broke in; "don't say again that feller stole a hundred dollars, because I'm telling you once more, Abe, I know he didn't take nothing, certain sure."

"*Geh wek*, Mawruss," Abe cried disgustedly; "you talk like a fool!"

"Do I?" Morris shouted. "All right, Abe. Maybe I do and maybe I don't, but just the same so positive I am he didn't done it, I'm going right down to Henry D. Feldman, and I will fix that feller Linkheimer he should work a poor half-starved yokel for five dollars a week and a couple of top-floor tenement rooms which it ain't worth six dollars a month. Wait! I'll show that sucker."

He seized his hat and made for the elevator door, which he had almost reached when Abe grabbed him by the arm.

"Mawruss," he cried, "are you crazy? What for you should put yourself out about this here young feller? He ain't the last shipping clerk in existence. You could get plenty good shipping clerks without bothering yourself like this. Besides, Mawruss, if he did steal it or if he didn't steal it, what difference does it make to us? With the silk piece goods which we got it around our place, Mawruss, we couldn't afford to take no chances."

"I ain't taking no chances, Abe," Morris main-

tained stoutly. "I know this feller ain't took the money."

"Sure, that's all right," Abe agreed; "but you couldn't afford to be away all morning right in the busy season. Besides, Mawruss, since when did you become to be so charitable all of a suddent?"

"Me charitable?" Morris cried indignantly. "I ain't charitable, Abe. *Gott soll hüten!* I leave that to suckers like Max Linkheimer. But when I know a decent, respectable feller is being put into jail for something which he didn't do at all, Abe, then that's something else again."

At this juncture the elevator arrived, and as he plunged in he shouted that he would be back before noon. Abe returned to the rear of the loft where a number of rush orders had been arranged for shipment. Under his instruction and supervision the stock boy nailed down the top boards of the packing cases, but in nearly every instance, after the case was strapped and stencilled, they discovered they had left one garment out, and the whole process had to be repeated. Thus it was nearly one o'clock before Abe's task was concluded, and although he had breakfasted late that morning, when he looked at his watch he became suddenly famished. "I could starve yet," he muttered, "for all that feller cares."

He walked up and down the showroom floor in an ecstasy of imaginary hunger, and as he was making

the hundredth trip the elevator door opened and Max Linkheimer stepped out. His low-cut waistcoat disclosed that his shirtfront, ordinarily of a glossy white perfection, had fallen victim to a profuse perspiration. Even his collar had not escaped the flood, and as for his I. O. M. A. charm, it seemed positively tarnished.

"Say, lookyhere, Potash," he began, "what d'ye mean by sending your partner to bail out that *ganef?*"

"Me send my partner to bail out a *ganef?*" Abe exclaimed. "What are you talking, nonsense?"

"I ain't talking nonsense," Linkheimer retorted. "Look at the kinds of conditions I am in. That feller Feldman made a fine monkey out of me in the police court."

"Was Feldman there too?" Abe asked.

"You don't know, I suppose, Feldman was there," Linkheimer continued; "and your partner went on his bail for two thousand dollars."

Abe shrugged his shoulders.

"In the first place, Mr. Linkheimer," he said, "I didn't tell my partner he should do nothing of the kind. He done it against my advice, Mr. Linkheimer. But at the same time, Mr. Linkheimer, if he wants to go bail for that feller, y'understand, what is it my business?"

"What is it your business?" Linkheimer repeated. "Why, don't you know if that feller runs away the

sheriff could come in here and clean out your place? That's all."

"What?" Abe cried. He sat down in the nearest chair and gaped at Linkheimer.

"Yes, sir," Linkheimer repeated, "you could be ruined by a thing like that."

Abe's lower jaw fell still further. He was too dazed for comment.

"W–what could I do about it?" he gasped at length.

"Do about it!" Linkheimer cried. "Why, if I had a partner who played me a dirty trick like that I'd kick him out of my place. There ain't a co-partnership agreement in existence that doesn't expressly say one partner shouldn't give a bail bond without the other partner's consent."

Abe rocked to and fro in his chair.

"After all these years a feller should do a thing like that to me!" he moaned.

Linkheimer smiled with satisfaction, and he was about to instance a striking and wholly imaginary case of one partner ruining another by giving a bail bond when the door leading to the cutting room in the rear opened and Morris Perlmutter appeared. As his eyes rested on Linkheimer they blazed with anger, and for once Morris seemed to possess a certain dignity.

"Out," he commanded; "out from *mein* store. you dawg, you!"

As he rushed on the startled button dealer, Abe grabbed his coat-tails and pulled him back.

"Say, what are we here, Mawruss," he cried, "a theaytre?"

"Let him alone, Abe," Linkheimer counselled in a rather shaky voice. "I'm pretty nearly twenty years older than he is, but I guess I could cope with him."

"You wouldn't cope with nobody around here," Abe replied. "If youse two want to cope you should go out on the sidewalk."

"Never mind," Morris broke in, his valour now quite evaporated; "I'll fix him yet."

"Another thing, Mawruss," Abe interrupted; "why don't you come in the front way like a man."

"I come in which way I please, Abe," Morris rejoined. "And furthermore, Abe, when I got with me a poor skeleton of a feller like Nathan Schenkmann, Abe, I don't take him up the front elevator. I would be ashamed for our competitors that they should think we let our work-people starve. The feller actually fainted on me as we was coming up the freight elevator."

"As you was coming up the freight elevator?" Abe repeated. "Do you mean to tell me you got the nerve to actually bring this feller into *mein* place yet?"

"Do I got to get your permission, Abe, I should

bring who I want to into my own place?" Morris rejoined.

"Then all I got to say is you should take him right out again," Abe said. "I wouldn't have no *ganévim* in my place. Once and for all, Mawruss, I am telling you I wouldn't stand for your nonsense. You are giving our stock as a bail for this feller, and if he runs away on us, the sheriff comes in and ——"

"Who says I give our stock as a bail for this feller?" Morris demanded. "I got a surety company bond, Abe, because Feldman says I shouldn't go on no bail bonds, and I give the surety company my personal check for a thousand dollars which they will return when the case is over. That's what I done it to keep this here Schenkmann out of jail, Abe, and if it would be necessary to get this here Linkheimer into jail, Abe, I would have another check for a thousand dollars for keeps."

Abe grew somewhat abashed at this disclosure. He looked at Linkheimer and then at Morris, but before he could think of something to say the elevator door opened and Jake stepped out. It was perhaps the first time in all their acquaintance with Jake that Abe and Morris had seen him with his face washed. Moreover, a clean collar served further to conceal his identity, and at first Abe did not recognize his former shipping clerk.

"Hallo, Mr. Potash!" Jake said.

"I'll be with you in one moment, Mister — er,"

Abe began. "Just take a — why, that's Jake, ain't it?"

Here he saw a chance for a conversational diversion and he jumped excitedly to his feet.

"What's the matter, Jake?" he asked. "You want your old job back?"

"It don't go so quick as all that, Mr. Potash," Jake answered. "I got a good business, Mr. Potash. I carry a fine line of cigars, candy, and stationery, and already I got an offer of twenty-five dollars more as I paid for the business. But I wouldn't take it. Why should I? I took in a lot money yesterday, and only this morning, Mr. Potash, a feller comes in my place and — why, there's the feller now!"

"Feller! What d'ye mean — feller?" Abe cried indignantly. "That ain't no feller. That's Mr. Max Linkheimer."

"Sure, I know!" Jake explained. "He's the feller I mean. Half an hour ago I was in his place, and they says there he comes up here. You was in *mein* store this morning, Mr. Linkheimer, ain't that right, and you bought from me a package of all-tobacco cigarettes?"

"*Nu, nu,* Jake," Morris broke in. "Make an end. You are interrupting us here."

Jake drew back his coat and clumsily unfastened a large safety pin which sealed the opening of his upper right-hand waistcoat pocket. Then he dug

down with his thumb and finger and produced a small yellow wad about the size of a postage stamp. This he proceeded to unfold until it took on the appearance of a hundred-dollar bill.

"He gives me this here," Jake announced, "and I give him the change for a ten-dollar bill. So this here is a hundred-dollar bill, ain't it, and it don't belong to me, which I come downtown I should give it him back again. What isn't mine I don't want at all."

This was perhaps the longest speech that Jake had ever made, and he paused to lick his dry lips for the peroration.

"And so," he concluded, handing the bill to Linkheimer, "here it is, and — and nine dollars and ninety cents, please."

Linkheimer grabbed the bill automatically and gazed at the figures on it with bulging eyes.

"Why," Abe gasped, "why, Linkheimer, you had four one-hundred-dollar bills and a ten-dollar bill in the safe this morning. Ain't it?"

Linkheimer nodded. Once more he broke into a copious perspiration, as he handed a ten-dollar bill to Jake.

"And so," Abe went on, "and so you must of took a hundred-dollar bill out of the safe last night, instead of a ten-dollar bill. Ain't it?"

Linkheimer nodded again.

"And so you made a mistake, ain't it?" Abe

cried. "And this here feller Schenkmann didn't took no money out of the safe at all. Ain't it?"

For the third time Linkheimer nodded, and Abe turned to his partner.

"What d'ye think of that feller?" he said, nodding his head in Linkheimer's direction.

Morris shrugged, and Abe plunged his hands into his trousers pockets and glared at Linkheimer.

"So, Linkheimer," he concluded, "you made a sucker out of yourself and out of me too! Ain't it?"

"I'm sorry, Abe," Linkheimer muttered, as he folded away the hundred-dollar bill in his wallet.

"I bet yer he's sorry," Morris interrupted. "I would be sorry too if I would got a lawsuit on my hands like he's got it."

"What d'ye mean?" Linkheimer cried. "I ain't got no lawsuit on my hands."

"Not yet," Morris said significantly, "but when Feldman hears of this, you would quick get a summons for a couple of thousand dollars damages which you done this young feller Schenkmann by making him false arrested."

"It ain't no more than you deserve, Linkheimer," Abe added. "You're lucky I don't sue you for trying to make trouble between me and my partner yet."

For one brief moment Linkheimer regarded Abe sorrowfully. There were few occasions to which Linkheimer could not do justice with a cut-and-

dried sentiment or a well-worn aphorism, and he was about to expatiate on ingratitude in business when Abe forestalled him.

"Another thing I wanted to say to you, Linkheimer," Abe said; "you shouldn't wait until the first of the month to send us a statement. Mail it to-night yet, because we give you notice we close your account right here and now."

One week later Abe and Morris watched Nathan Schenkmann driving nails into the top of a packing case with a force and precision of which Jake had been wholly incapable; for seven days of better housing and better feeding had done wonders for Nathan.

"Yes, Abe," Morris said as they turned away; "I think we made a find in that boy, and we also done a charity too. Some people's got an idee, Abe, that business is always business; but with me I think differencely. You could never make no big success in business unless you got a little sympathy for a feller oncet in a while. Ain't it?"

Abe nodded.

"I give you right, Mawruss," he said.

CHAPTER TWO

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

THERE was an intimate connection between Abe Potash's advent in the lobby of the Prince Clarence Hotel one hot summer day in June and the publication in that morning's Arrival of Buyers column of the following statement and news item:

Griesman, M., Dry Goods Company, Syracuse; M. Griesman, ladies' and misses' cloaks, suits, waists, and furs; Prince Clarence Hotel.

Nevertheless, when Abe caught sight of Mr. Griesman lolling in one of the hotel's capacious *fauteuils* he quickly looked the other way and passed on to the clerk's desk. Then he asked in a loud tone for Mr. Elkan Reinberg, of Boonton, New Jersey; and, almost before the clerk told him that no such person was registered, he turned about and recognized Mr. Griesman with an elaborate start.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Griesman?" he exclaimed. "Ain't it a pleasure to see you! What are you doing here in New York?"

Griesman looked hard at his interlocutor before replying.

Some two years earlier there had been an acrimonious correspondence between them with reference to a shipment of skirts lost in transit — a correspondence ending in threatened litigation; and Mr. Griesman had transferred his account with Potash & Perlmutter to Sammet Brothers. Hence he regarded Abe's proffered hand coldly, and instead of rising to his feet he continued to puff at his cigar for a few moments.

"I know your face," he said at length, "but your name ain't familiar."

"Think again, Mr. Griesman," Abe said, quite unmoved by the rebuff. "Where did you seen me before?"

"I think I seen you in a law office oncet," Griesman said. "To the best of my recollection the occasion was one which you said you didn't give a damn about my business at all, and if I wouldn't pay for the skirts you would make it hot for me. But so far what I hear it, I ain't paid for the skirts, and I didn't sweat none either."

"Why not let bygones be bygones, Mr. Griesman?" Abe rejoined.

"I ain't got no bygones, Abe," Griesman replied. "The bygones is all on your side. I ain't got the skirts; so I didn't pay for 'em."

"Well, what is a few skirts that fellers should be

enemies about 'em, Mr. Griesman? The skirts is *vorbei schon* long since already. Why don't you anyhow come down to our place oncet in a while and see us, Moe?"

"What would I do in your place, Abe?"

"You still use a couple garments, like we make it, in your business, Moe," Abe continued. "You got to buy goods in New York oncet in a while. Ain't it?"

"Well, I do and I don't, Abe," Moe rejoined. "I ain't the back number which I oncet used to was, Abe. I got fresh idees a little too, Abe. Nowadays, Abe, a buyer couldn't rely on his own judgment at all. Before he buys a new season's goods he's got to find out what they're wearing on the other side first. So with me, Abe, I go first to Paris, Abe. Then I see there what I want to buy here, Abe, and when I come back to New York I buy only them goods which has got the idees I seen it in Paris."

"But how do you know we ain't got the idees you would seen it in Paris, Moe?"

"I don't know, Abe," Moe replied, "because I ain't been to Paris yet so far. I am now on my way over to Paris, Abe; and furthermore, Abe, if I would been to Paris, y'understand, what does a feller like Mawruss know about designing?"

"What d'ye mean, what does a feller like Mawruss know about designing?" Abe repeated. "Don't you fool yourself, Moe; Mawruss is a first-class,

A number one designer. He gets his idees straight from the best fashion journals. Then too, Moe, when it comes to up-to-date styles, I ain't such a big fool neither, y'understand. I know one or two things about designing myself, Moe, and you could take it from me, Moe, there ain't no house in the trade, Moe, which they got better facilities for giving you the latest up-to-the-minute style like we got it."

"Sure, I know," Moe continued; "but as I told it you before, Abe, I ain't in the market for my fall goods now. I am now only on my way to Paris, and when I would come back it would be time for you to waste your breath."

"I could waste my breath all I want to, Moe," Abe rejoined. "I ain't like some people, Moe; my breath don't cost me nothing."

"What d'ye mean?" Moe cried indignantly. He had allowed himself the unusual indulgence of a cocktail that morning as a corollary to a rather turbulent evening with Leon Sammet, and he had been absently chewing a clove throughout the interview with Abe.

"I mean Hymie Salzman, designer for Sammet Brothers," Abe replied. "There's a feller which he got it such a breath, Moe, he ought to put a revenue stamp on his chin."

"That may be, Abe; but the feller delivers the goods. Sammet Brothers are sending him to Paris

this year too, Abe. He is sailing with Leon Sammet on the same ship with me, Abe."

"Well, then all I could say to you is, Moe, you should look out for yourself and don't play no auction pinocle with that feller. Every afternoon he is playing with such sharks like Moe Rabiner and Marks Pasinsky, and if he ever got out of a job as designer he could go on the stage at one of them continual performances as a card juggler yet. A three-fifty hand is the least that feller deals himself."

"One thing is sure, Abe, you couldn't never sell me no goods by knocking Hymie Salzman."

"I ain't trying to sell you no goods, Moe; I am only talking to you like an old friend should talk to another. When are you coming back?"

"About July 1st I should be here," Moe replied, "and if you want to come and see me like an old friend, Abe, you are welcome. Only I got to say this to you, Abe, I forgot them skirts long since ago already, and I wish you the same."

When Abe entered his showroom that morning Morris Perlmutter had just arranged a high-neck evening gown on a wire model.

"Well, Abe, what d'ye think of it?" he exclaimed proudly, as he wiped his glistening brow. Abe fingered the garment's silken folds and puffed critically at a black cigar.

"What could I think, Mawruss?" he replied. "The garment looks all right, Mawruss, and I ain't kicking, y'understand; but I tell you the honest truth, Mawruss, the way things is nowadays, Mawruss, a feller could be Elijah the Prophet already, and he couldn't tell in June what is going to please the garment buyers in September."

Morris flushed angrily.

"I don't know what comes over you lately, Abe; nothing suits you," he cried. "I got here a garment which if we would be paying a designer ten thousand dollars a year yet he couldn't turn us out nothing better, and yet you are kicking."

"What d'ye mean, kicking?" Abe rejoined. "I ain't kicking. I am only passing a remark, Mawruss. I am saying I couldn't tell nothing about it, Mawruss, because so far ahead of time like this, Mawruss, a garment could look ever so rotten, Mawruss, and it could turn out to be a record-seller anyhow."

"So, Abe," Morris broke out furiously, "you think the garment looks rotten! What? Well, all I got to say is this, Abe; if the garment looks so rotten you should quick hire some one which could design a better one, because I am sick and tired of your kicking."

"What's the matter, you got pepper up your nose all of a sudden, Mawruss?" Abe protested. "I ain't saying nothing about the garment is rotten.

I am only saying it gets so nowadays that in June a feller turns out a style which if we was making masquerade costumes already it would be freaky anyhow; and yet, Mawruss, it would go big in September. You get the idee what I am talking about, Mawruss?"

"I get the idee all right," Morris retorted with bitter emphasis. "You got the nerve to stand there and tell me this here garment is freaky like a masquerade costume. *Schon gut*, Abe. From now on I wash myself of the whole thing. I am through, Abe. You should right away advertise for a designer."

Abe rose wearily to his feet.

"With a touchy proposition like you, Mawruss," he said, "a feller couldn't open his mouth at all. I ain't saying nothing about you as a designer, Mawruss. All I am saying, Mawruss, is, a designer could be a feller which he is so high-grade like Paquin or any of them Frenchers, but if he gets his idees from fashion papers *oder* the *Daily Cloak and Suit Gazette*, Mawruss, then oncet in a while he turns out a sticker."

Morris was stripping the garment from the display form, but he paused to favour his partner with a glare.

"What would you want me to do, then?" he asked. "Make up styles out from my own head, Abe? If I wouldn't get my idees from the fashion papers, Abe, where would I get 'em?"

"Where would you get 'em?" Abe repeated. "Why, where does Hymie Salzman, designer for Sammet Brothers, and Charles Eisenblum, designer for Klinger & Klein, get their idees, Mawruss?"

This was purely a rhetorical question, but as Abe paused to heighten the effect of the peroration, Morris undertook to supply an answer.

"Them suckers don't get their idees, Abe," he said; "they steal 'em. If a concern gets a run on a certain garment, Abe, them two highway robbers makes a duplicate of it before you could turn around your head. That's the kind of cut-throats them fellers is, Abe."

"Sure, I know," Abe continued; "but they got to turn out some garments of their own, Mawruss, and they get their idees right from headquarters. They get their idees from Paris, Mawruss. Only this morning I hear it that Hymie Salzman sails for Paris on Saturday."

"Well, I couldn't stop him, Abe," Morris commented.

"Sure, I know, Mawruss," Abe went on; "but things is very quiet here in the store, Mawruss, and for a month yet we wouldn't do hardly no business. I could get along here all right until, say, July 15th anyhow."

For two minutes Morris looked hard at his partner.

"What are you driving into, Abe?" he asked at length.

"Why, I am driving into this, Mawruss," Abe continued. "Why don't you go to Paris?"

"Me go to Paris!" Morris exclaimed.

"Why not?" Abe murmured. The suggestion did seem preposterous after all.

"Why not!" Morris repeated. "There's a whole lot of reasons why not, Abe, and the first and foremost is that the Atlantic Ocean would got to run dry and they got to build a railroad there first, Abe. I crossed the water just oncet, Abe, and I wouldn't cross it again if I never sold another dollar's worth more goods so long as I live, Abe; and that's all there is to it."

"What are you talking nonsense, Mawruss? On them big boats like the *Morrisania* there ain't no more motion than if a feller would be going to Coney Island, Mawruss."

"That's all right, Abe," Morris replied firmly. "Me, if I would go to Coney Island, I am taking always the trolley, Abe, from the New York side of the bridge. Furthermore, Abe, if Sammet Brothers sends a drinker like Hymie Salzman to Paris, Abe, they got a right to spend their money the way they want to; but all I got to say is that we shouldn't be afraid they would cop out any of our trade on that account, Abe. Hymie would come home with new idees of tchampanyer wine and not garments, Abe."

"Sure, I know, Mawruss," Abe retorted; "but

if you would go over to Paris, Mawruss, you would come back with some new idees which you would turn out some real snappy stuff, Mawruss. As it is, Mawruss, with a sticker like you got it there, Mawruss, we would ruin our business."

"All right, Abe; I heard enough. You got altogether too much to say for a feller which comes downtown at ten o'clock with no excuse nor nothing."

At this point Abe interrupted his partner long enough to relate his visit to Moe Griesman, but the information entirely failed to placate Morris.

"All right, Abe," he shouted; "why don't you go to Paris? That's all you're fit for. I got a wife and baby, Abe; but with a feller which he has got no more interest in his home, y'understand, than he wants to go to Paris, Abe — all right! Go ahead, Abe; go to Paris. I am satisfied."

Abe regarded his partner for one hesitating moment.

"*Schon gut*, I will go to Paris," he said; and the next moment the elevator door closed behind him.

For five minutes after Abe's departure Morris gazed earnestly at his newest creation. He had intended the model as a pleasant surprise to his partner, since not only had he conceived the garment to be a triumph of the dressmaker's art, but it had been finished far in advance of the season for originating new styles. He had confidently expected

an enthusiastic reception of this *chef-d'œuvre;* but in view of Abe's scathing criticism, he commenced to doubt his own estimate of the beauty of the dress. Indeed, the longer he looked at it the uglier it appeared, until at length he grabbed it roughly and literally tore it from the wire form. He had rolled it into a ball and was about to cast it into a corner when the elevator door opened and a young lady stepped out.

"Good morning, Mr. Perlmutter," she said.

Morris turned his face in the direction of the speaker and at once his mouth expanded into a broad grin.

"Why, Miss Smith!" he exclaimed as he rushed forward to greet her. "How do you do? Me and Mrs. Perlmutter was just talking about you to-day. How much you think that boy weighs now?"

"Sixteen pounds," Miss Smith replied.

"Twenty-two," Morris cried — "net."

"You don't say so!" said Miss Smith.

"We got you to thank for that, Miss Smith," Morris continued. "The doctor says without you anything could happen."

Miss Smith deprecated this compliment to her professional skill with a smiling shake of the head.

"We wouldn't forget it in a hurry," Morris declared. "Everything what that boy is to-day, Miss Smith, we owe it to you."

"You're making it hard for me, Mr. Perlmutter,"

Miss Smith replied, "because I've come to ask you a favour."

"A favour?" Morris replied. "You couldn't ask me to do you a favour because it wouldn't be no favour. It would be a pleasure. What could I do for you?"

"I have to leave town to-morrow on a case," Miss Smith explained, "and I need a dress in a hurry, something light for evening wear."

Morris frowned perplexedly.

"That's too bad," he said, "because just at present we got nothing but last year's goods in stock — all except — all except this."

He unfolded the model and shook it out.

"What a pretty dress!" Miss Smith cried, clasping her hands.

"Pretty!" Morris exclaimed. "How could you say it was pretty?"

"It's perfectly stunning," Miss Smith continued. "What size is it, Mr. Perlmutter?"

"The usual size," Morris replied; "thirty-six."

"Why, that's just my size," Miss Smith declared. "Let me see it." Morris handed her the dress and she examined it carefully. "What a pity," she said, "it has a slight rip in front. Somebody's been handling it carelessly."

"Sure, I know," Morris said. "I tore it myself, Miss Smith; but if you really and truly like it, Miss Smith, which I tell you the truth I don't, and my

partner neither, you are welcome to it, and I would give you a little piece from the same goods which you could fix up the rip with."

"I couldn't think of it," Miss Smith replied.

"Not at all, Miss Smith. You would do me a favour if you would take it along with you right now."

Miss Smith fairly beamed as she opened her handbag.

"How much is it?" she asked.

"How much is it?" Morris repeated. "Why, Miss Smith, you could take that dress only on one condition. The condition is that you wouldn't pay me nothing for it, and that next fall, when we really got something in stock, you would come in and pick out as many of our highest-price garments as you would want."

Morris's hand shook so with this unusual access of generosity that he could hardly wrap up the garment.

"Also, Miss Smith, I expect you will come up and have dinner with us as soon as you get back from wherever you are going. Already the baby commences to recognize people which he meets, and we want him he should never forget you, Miss Smith."

The cordiality with which Morris ushered Miss Smith into the elevator was in striking contrast to the brusk manner in which he greeted Abe half an hour later.

"*Nu!*" he growled. "Where was you now?"

"By the steamship office," Abe replied. "I am going next Saturday."

"Going next Saturday?" Morris repeated. "Where to?"

"To Paris," Abe replied, "on the same ship with Moe Griesman, Leon Sammet and Hymie Salzman."

Morris nodded slowly as the news sank in.

"Well, all I could say is, Abe," he commented at length, "that I don't wish you and the other passengers no harm, y'understand; but, with them three suckers on board the ship, I hope it sinks."

The five days preceding Abe's departure were made exceedingly busy for him by Morris, who soon became reconciled to his partner's fashion-hunting trip, particularly when he learned that Moe Griesman formed part of the quarry.

"You got to remember one thing, Abe," he declared. "Extremes is nix. Let the other feller buy the freaks; what we are after is something in moderation."

"You shouldn't worry about that, Mawruss," Abe replied. "I wouldn't bring you home no such model like you showed it me this week."

"You would be lucky if you wouldn't bring home worser yet," Morris retorted. "But anyhow that ain't the point. I got here the names of a couple commission men which it is their business to look out for greenhorns."

"What d'ye mean, greenhorn?" Abe cried indignantly. "I ain't no greenhorn."

"That's all right," Morris went on; "in France only the Frenchers ain't greenhorns. You ain't told me what kind of a stateroom you got it."

"Well, the outside rooms was one hundred and twenty-five dollars and the inside room, was eight-five dollars," Abe explained; "so I took an inside room because the light wouldn't come in and wake me up so early in the morning, Mawruss, and forty dollars is as good to me as it is to them suckers what runs the steamboat company. Ain't it?"

Nevertheless, when Abe found himself in his upper berth the morning after he had parted with Minnie, Rosie, and Morris at the pier, he had reason to regret his economy. He shared his stateroom with a singer of minor operatic rôles, who, as a souvenir of a farewell luncheon ashore, carried into that narrow precinct an odour of garlic that persisted for the entire voyage. In addition, the returning artist smoked Egyptian cigarettes and anointed his generous head of hair with violet brilliantine. Hence it was not until the boat was passing Brow Head that Abe staggered up the companionway to the promenade deck.

"Why, hallo, Abe!" cried a bronzed and bulky figure. "I ain't seen you for almost a week."

"No?" Abe murmured. "Well, if you would wanted to seen me, Leon, you knew where you could

find me: just below the pantry my stateroom was, inside. A dawg shouldn't got to live in such a place."

At this juncture Salzman appeared to summon his employer to a game of auction pinocle in the smoking room, and as Abe started to make a feeble promenade around the deckhouse he encountered Moe Griesman. After Moe had taken Abe's hand in a limp clasp he nodded in the direction of the smoking room.

"What d'ye think of them two suckers?" he croaked. "They ain't missed a meal since they came aboard."

"What could you expect from a couple of tough propositions like that?" Abe replied. "Was you sick, Moe?"

"Sick!" Griesman exclaimed. "I give you my word, Abe, last Thursday night I was so sick that I commenced to figure out already how much I would of saved in premiums if my insurings policies would be straight life instead of endowment. No, Abe; this here business of going to Paris for your styles ain't what it's cracked up to be. Always up to now I got fine weather crossing, but the way the water has been the last six days, Abe, I am beginning to think I could get just so good idees of the season's models right in New York."

"D'ye know, Moe," said Abe, "I'm starting to feel hungry? I wish that feller with the *shofar* would come."

Hardly had he spoken when the ship's bugler announced luncheon, but it was some minutes before Moe could summon up sufficient courage to go below to the dining saloon, and when they entered they found Leon Sammet and Hymie Salzman had nearly concluded their meal.

"Steward," Leon shouted as Moe sat down next to him, "bring me a nice piece of Camembert cheese."

"One moment, Leon," Griesman interrupted; "if you bring that stuff under my nose here I would never buy from you a dollar's worth more goods so long as I live!"

"The feller goes too far, Abe," he said, after Leon had cancelled the order and departed to drink his coffee in the smoking room. "The feller goes too far. Yesterday afternoon I was sitting on deck, and the way I felt, Abe, my worst enemy wouldn't got to feel it. Do you believe me, Abe, that feller got the nerve to offer me a cigar yet! It pretty near finished me up. He only done it out of spite, Abe, but I fooled him. I took the cigar and I got it in my pocket right now."

"Don't show me," Abe cried hurriedly. "I'll tell you the truth: there ain't nothing in the smoking habit. I'm going to cut it out. Waiter, bring me only a plate of clear soup and some dry toast. There ain't no need for a feller to smoke, Moe; it's only an extra expense."

"I think you're right, Abe," Moe said; "but I know that this here cigar cost Leon a quarter on board ship here, and I thought I would show him he shouldn't get so gay."

Despite Abe's resolution, however, a large black cigar protruded from his moustache when he stood on the wharf at Cherbourg, twenty-four hours later, and a small, ill-shaven stevedore, clad in a dark blouse and shabby corduroy trousers, pointed to the cloud of smoke that issued from Abe's lips and chattered a voluble protest.

"What does he say, Moe?" Abe asked.

"I don't know," Moe replied. "He's talking French."

"French!" Abe exclaimed. "What are you trying to do — kid me? A dirty *schlemiel* of a greenhorn like him should talk French! What an idee!"

Nevertheless, Abe was made to throw away his cigar, and it was not until the quartette were snugly enclosed in a first-class compartment en route to Paris that Abe felt safe to indulge in another cigar. He explored his pockets, but without result.

"Moe," he said, "do you got maybe another cigar on you?"

"I'm smoking the one which Leon give it me on the ship the other day," Moe replied. "Leon, be a good feller; give him a cigar."

"I give you my word, Moe, this is the last one," Leon replied as he bit the end off a huge invincible.

"You got something there bulging in your vest pocket, Abe. Why don't you smoke it?"

"That ain't a cigar," Abe answered; "that's a fountain pen."

"Smoke it anyhow," Leon advised; "because the only cigars you could get on this train is French Government cigars, and I'd sooner tackle a fountain pen as one of them rolls of spinach."

"That's a country!" Abe commented. "Couldn't even get a decent cigar here!"

"In Paris you could get plenty good cigars," Hymie Salzman said, and Hymie was right for, at the Gare St. Lazare, M. Adolphe Kaufmann-Levi, *commissionnaire*, awaited them, his pockets literally spilling red-banded perfectos at every gesture of his lively fingers. M. Kaufmann-Levi spoke English, French, and German with every muscle of his body from the waist up.

"Welcome to France, Mr. Potash," he said. "You had a good voyage, doubtless; because you Americans are born sailors."

"Maybe we are born sailors," Abe admitted, "but I must of grew out of it. I tell you the honest truth, if I could go back by trolley, and it took a year, I would do it."

"The weather is always more settled in July than in August," said M. Kaufmann-Levi, "and I wouldn't worry about the return trip just now. I have rooms for you gentlemen all on one floor of a

hotel near the Opera, and taximeters are in waiting. After you have settled we will take dinner together."

Thus it happened that, at half past six that evening, M. Kaufmann-Levi conducted his four guests from the Restaurant Marguery to a sidewalk table of the Café de la Paix, and for almost an hour they watched the crowd making its way to the Opera.

"You see, Moe," Abe said, "everything is tunics this year; tunics *oder* chiffon overskirts, net collars and yokes."

Moe nodded absently. His eyes were glued to a lady sitting at the next table.

"You got to come to Paris to see 'em, Abe," he murmured. "They don't make 'em like that in America."

"We make as good garments in America as anywhere," Abe protested.

"Garments I ain't talking about at all," Moe whispered hoarsely; "I mean peaches. Did y'ever see anything like that lady there sitting next to you? Look at the get-up, Abe. Ain't it chic?"

"It's a pretty good-looking model, Moe," Abe replied, "but a bit too plain for us. See all the fancy-looking garments there are round here."

"Plain nothing!" Moe muttered. "Look at the way it fits her. I tell you, Abe, the French ladies know how to wear their clothes."

A moment later the couple at the next table

passed along toward the Opera, and once more Abe and Moe turned their attention to the crowds on the boulevard.

For the remainder of their stay in Paris Abe and Leon spent their time in a ceaseless hunt for new models and their nights in plying Moe Griesman with entertainment. It cannot be said that Moe discouraged them to any marked degree, for while he occasionally hinted to Abe that the New York cloak and suit trade was an open market, and garment buyers had a large field from which to choose, he also told Leon that he saw no reason why he should not continue to buy goods from Sammet Brothers, provided the prices were right.

Nearly every evening found them sitting at the corner table of the Café de la Paix, and upon many of these occasions the next table was occupied by the same couple that sat there on the night of Abe's arrival in Paris.

"You know, Abe, that dress is the most uniquest thing in Paris," Moe exclaimed on the evening of the last day in Paris. "I ain't seen nothing like it anywhere."

"Good reason, Moe," Leon Sammet cried; it's rotten. That's one of last year's models."

"What are you talking nonsense? One of the last year's models!" Moe Griesman cried indignantly. "Don't you think I know a new style when I see it?"

"Moe is right, Leon," Abe said. "You ain't got

no business to talk that way at all. The style is this year's model."

"Of course, Abe," Leon said with ironic precision, "when a judge like you says something, y'understand, then it's so. Take another of them sixty-cent ice-creams, Moe."

Ordinarily Abe would have turned Leon's sarcasm with a retort in kind, but Leon's remark fell on deaf ears, for Abe was listening to a conversation at the next table and the language was English.

"It's time to start back to the hotel," said the young lady to her escort, who was an elderly gentleman.

Abe turned to Moe and Leon.

"Excuse me for a few minutes," he said; "I got to go back to the hotel for something."

He handed Leon a twenty-franc piece.

"If I shouldn't get back, pay the bill!" he cried, and jumping to his feet he followed the couple from the next table.

The old gentleman walked feebly with the aid of a cane, and the young lady held him by the arm as they proceeded to the main entrance of the Grand Hotel. Abe dogged their footsteps until the old gentleman disappeared into the lift and the young lady retired to the winter garden that forms the interior court of the hotel. As she seated herself in a wicker chair Abe approached with his hat in his hand.

"Lady, excuse me," he began; "I ain't no loafer. I'm in the cloak and suit business, and I would like to speak to you a few words — something very particular."

The young lady turned in her chair. She was not alarmed, only surprised.

"I hope you don't think I am asking you anything out of the way," Abe said, without further prelude; "but you got a dress on, lady, which I don't know how much you paid for it, but if three hundred of these here — now — francs would be any inducement I'd like to buy it from you. Of course I wouldn't ask you to take it off right now, but if you would leave it at the clerk's desk here I could call for it in half an hour."

The young lady made no reply, instead she threw back her head and laughed heartily.

"It ain't no joke, lady," Abe continued as he laid three flimsy notes of the Bank of France in her lap. "That's as good as American greenbacks."

The young lady ceased laughing, and for a minute, hesitated between indignation and renewed mirth, but at last her sense of humour conquered.

"Very well," she said; "stay here for a few minutes."

Half an hour later she returned with the dress wrapped up in a paper parcel.

"How did you know I wouldn't go off with the

money, dress and all?" she asked as Abe seized the package.

"I took a chance, lady," he said; "like you are doing about the money which I give you being good."

"Have no scruples on that score," the young lady replied. "I had it examined at the clerk's office just now."

When M. Adolphe Kaufmann-Levi bade farewell to Moe, Abe, Leon, and Hymie Salzman, at the Gare St. Lazare, he uttered words of encouragement and cheer which failed to justify themselves after the four travellers' embarkment at Cherbourg.

"You will have splendid weather," he had declared. "It will be fine all the way over."

When the steamer passed out of the breakwater into the English Channel she breasted a northeaster that lasted all the way to the Banks. Even Hymie Salzman went under, and Leon Sammet walked the swaying decks alone. Twice a day he poked his head into the stateroom occupied by Moe Griesman and Abe Potash, for Abe had thrown economy to the winds and had gone halves with Moe in the largest outside room on board.

"Boys," Leon would ask, "ain't you going to get up? The air is fine on deck."

Had he but known it, Moe Griesman developed day by day, with growing intensity, that violent

hatred for Leon that the hopelessly seasick feel toward good sailors; while toward Abe, who groaned unceasingly in the upper berth, Moe Griesman evinced the affectionate interest that the poor sailor evinces in any one who suffers more keenly than himself.

At length Nantucket lightship was passed, and as the sea grew calmer two white-faced invalids, that on close scrutiny might have been recognized by their oldest friends to be Moe and Abe, tottered up the companionway and sank exhausted into the nearest deckchairs.

"Well, Moe," Leon cried, as he bustled toward them smoking a large cigar and clad in a suit of immaculate white flannels, "so you're up again?"

The silence with which Moe received this remark ought to have warned Leon, but he plunged headlong to his fate.

"We are now only twenty hours from New York," he said, "and suppose I go downstairs and bring you up some of them styles which I got in Paris."

"You shouldn't trouble yourself," Moe said shortly.

"Why not?" Leon inquired.

"Because, for all I care," Moe replied viciously, "you could fire 'em overboard. I would *oser* buy from you a button."

"What's the matter?" Leon cried.

"You know what's the matter," Moe continued.

"You come every day into my stateroom and mock me yet because I am sick."

"I mock you!" Leon exclaimed.

"That's what I said," Moe continued; "and if you wouldn't take that cigar away from here I'll break your neck when I get on shore again."

Leon backed away hurriedly and Moe turned to Abe.

"Am I right or wrong?" he said.

Abe nodded. He was incapable of audible speech, but hour by hour he grew stronger until at dinner-time he was able to partake of some soup and roast beef, and even to listen with a wan smile to Moe's caustic appraisement of Leon Sammet's character. Finally, after a good night's rest, Moe and Abe awoke to find the engine stilled at Quarantine. They were saved the necessity of packing their trunks for the cogent reason that they had been physically unable to open them, let alone unpack them. Hence they repaired at once to breakfast.

Leon was already seated at table, and he hastily cancelled an order for Yarmouth bloater and asked instead for a less fragrant dish.

"Good morning, Moe," he said pleasantly.

Moe turned to Abe. "To-morrow morning at nine o'clock, Abe," he said, "I would be down in your store to look over your line."

"Steward," Leon Sammet cried, "never mind that steak. I would take the bloater anyhow."

Abe and Moe breakfasted lightly on egg and toast, and returned to their stateroom as they passed the Battery.

"Say, lookyhere, Moe," Abe said; "I want to show you something which I bought for you as a surprise the night before we left Paris. I got it right in the top of my suitcase here, and it wouldn't take a minute to show it to you."

Abe was unstrapping his suitcase as he spoke, and the next minute he shook out the gown he had purchased from the young lady of the Café de la Paix, and exposed it to Moe's admiring gaze.

"How did you get hold of that, Abe?" Moe asked.

Abe narrated his adventure at the Grand Hotel, while Moe gaped his astonishment.

"I always thought you got a pretty good nerve, Abe," he declared, "but this sure is the limit. How much did you pay for it?"

"Three hundred of them — now — francs," Abe replied; "but I've been figuring out the cost of manufacturing and material, and I could duplicate it in New York for forty dollars a garment."

"You mean thirty-five dollars a garment, don't you?" Moe said.

"No, I don't," Abe replied. "I mean forty dollars a garment. Why do you say thirty-five dollars?"

"Because at forty dollars apiece, Abe, I could use for my Sarahcuse, Rochester, and Buffalo stores

about fifty of these garments, and you ought to figure on at least five dollars' profit on a garment."

"Well, maybe I am figuring it a little too generous, y'understand; so, if that goes, Moe, I will quote the selling price at, say, forty dollars a garment to you, Moe."

"Sure, it goes," Moe said; "and I'll be at your store to-morrow morning at nine o'clock to decide on sizes and shades."

Abe's passage through the customs examination was accomplished with ease, for nearly all his Paris purchases were packed in the hold to be cleared by a custom-house broker. His stateroom baggage contained no dutiable articles save the gown in question and a few trinkets for Rosie, who was at the pier to greet him. Indeed, she bestowed on him a series of kisses that reëchoed down the long pier, and Abe's pallor gave way to the sunburnt hue of his amused fellow-passengers. In one of them Abe recognized with a start the tanned features of the young lady of the Café de la Paix.

"Moe," he said, nudging Griesman, "there's your friend."

Moe turned in the direction indicated by Abe, and his interested manner was not unnoticed by Mrs. Potash.

"How is your dear wife and daughter, Mr. Griesman?" she asked significantly. "I suppose you missed 'em a whole lot."

When Moe assured her that he did she sniffed so violently that it might have been taken for a snort.

"Well, Abe," he said at length, "I'll be going on to the Prince Clarence, and I'll see you in the store to-morrow morning. Good-by, Mrs. Potash."

"Good-by," Mrs. Potash replied, with an emphasis that implied "good riddance," and then, as Moe disappeared toward the street, she sniffed again. "It don't take long for some loafers to forget their wives!" she said.

"Well, Abe," Morris said, after the first greetings had passed between them that afternoon, "I'm glad to see you back in the store."

"You ain't half so glad to see me back, Mawruss, as I am that I should be back," Abe replied. "Not that the trip ain't paid us, Mawruss, because I got a trunkful of samples on the way up here which I assure you is a work of art."

"Sure, I know!" Morris commented with just a tinge of bitterness in his tones; "Paris is the place for styles. Us poor suckers over here don't know a thing about designing."

"Well, Mawruss, I'll tell you," Abe went on: "you are a first-class, A number one designer, I got to admit, and there ain't nobody that I consider is better as you in the whole garment trade; but" — here he paused to unfasten his suitcase — but, Mawruss," he continued, "I got here just one sample

style which I brought it with me, Mawruss, and I think, Mawruss, you would got to agree with me, such models we don't turn out on this side."

Here he opened the suitcase, and carefully taking out the dress of the Café de la Paix he spread it on a sample table.

"What d'ye think of that, Mawruss?" he asked.

Morris made no answer. He was gazing at the garment with bulging eyes, and beads of perspiration ran down his forehead.

"Abe!" he gasped at length, "where did you get that garment from?"

Before Abe could answer, the elevator door opened and a young lady stepped out. It was now Abe's turn to gasp, for the visitor was no other than the tanned and ruddy young person from the Café de la Paix.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Perlmutter," she said. "I've just got back."

"Oh, good afternoon, Miss Smith!" Morris cried.

"I hope I'm not interrupting you," she continued.

"Not at all," Morris said; "not at all."

Then a wave of recollection came over him, and he muttered a half-smothered exclamation.

"Abe, Miss Smith," he almost shouted, and then he sat down. "Say, lookyhere, Abe, what is all this, anyway? Miss Smith comes in here and ——"

"Well, upon my word!" Miss Smith interrupted; "if it isn't the gentleman from the Café de la Paix — and, of all things, there is the very dress!"

Abe shrugged his shoulders

"That's right, Miss Whatever-your-name is," Abe admitted; "that's the dress, and since I paid you sixty dollars for it I don't think you got any kick coming."

"Sixty dollars!" Morris cried. "Why, that dress as a sample garment only cost us twenty-two-fifty to make up."

"Cost us?" Abe repeated. "As a sample garment? What are you talking about?"

"I am talking about this, Abe," Morris replied: "that dress is the self-same garment which I designed it, and which you says was rotten and freaky, and which I give it to Miss Smith here for a present, and which you paid Miss Smith sixty dollars for."

"And here is the sixty dollars now," Miss Smith broke in. "I hurried here as fast as I could to give it to you, Mr. Perlmutter."

"One moment," Abe said. "I don't know who this young lady is or nothing; but do you mean to told me that this here dress which I bought it in Paris was made up right here in our place?"

"Here, Abe," Morris said, "I want to show you something. Here is from the same goods a garment, and them goods as you know we get it from the Hamsuckett Mills. So far what I hear it, the

Hamsuckett Mills don't sell their output in Paris. Am I right or wrong?"

Abe nodded slowly.

"Well, Mr. Perlmutter," Miss Smith said, "here's your sixty dollars. I've got to get back to my patient. You know that I went to Paris with a rheumatic case, and I've left the old gentleman in charge of a friend. I came here to settle up."

"Excuse me," said Abe; "I ain't been introduced to this young lady yet."

"Why, I thought you knew her," Morris said. "This is Miss Smith, the trained nurse which was so good to my Minnie when my Abie was born."

"Is that so?" Abe cried. "Well, Miss Smith, you should take that sixty dollars and keep it, because, Mawruss, on the way over I sold Moe Griesman fifty garments of that there style of yours at forty dollars apiece."

"You don't say so!" Morris cried. "You don't say so! Well, all I got to say is, Miss Smith, in the first place, if Abe wouldn't of told you to keep that sixty dollars I sure would of done so, and in the second place, I want you to come in here next week and pick out half a dozen dresses. Ain't that right, Abe?"

"I bet yer that's right, Mawruss; we wouldn't take no for an answer," Abe replied. "And you should also leave us your name and address, Miss Smith, because, *Gott soll hüten*, if I should be sick,

y'understand, I don't want nobody else to nurse me but you."

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," Morris said the following morning, "that trunkful of Paris samples which the custom-house says we would get this morning ain't come yet."

Abe clapped his partner on the shoulder and grinned happily.

"What do I care, Mawruss?" he said. "For my part they should never come. I ain't got no use for Paris fashions at all. Styles which Mawruss Perlmutter originates is good enough for me, because I always said it, Mawruss, you are a crackerjack, high-grade, A number one designer!"

CHAPTER THREE

DEAD MEN'S SHOES

"THERE goes that sucker, Aaron Kronberg, from Port Sullivan," Abe Potash declared to his partner, Morris Perlmutter, as they looked from the windows of their showroom to the opposite sidewalk some four stories below. "Ain't it funny that feller would never buy from us a dollar's worth more goods?"

"The reason ain't hard to find, Abe," Morris replied. "Oncet a garment buyer gets into the hands of a competitor like Leon Sammet, it's all off. I bet yer Leon tells him we are all kinds of crooks and swindlers."

"What could you expect from a cut-throat like Leon Sammet? That feller is no good and his father before him is also a thief. I know his people from the old country yet. One was worser as the other."

"Well, there's nothing the matter with Aaron's cousin, Alex Kronberg, anyhow," Morris observed. "That feller does a fine business in Bridgetown, and Sammet Brothers could no more take his trade away from us than they could fly."

"That ain't our fault, Mawruss," Abe rejoined. "Sammet Brothers is fly enough to do anything, Mawruss; but, the way Aaron Kronberg hates Alex Kronberg, if they was to sell Alex a single garment, y'understand, Aaron would never buy from them a dollar's worth more goods so long as he lived."

"Ain't it a disgrace them two fellers is such enemies, Abe?"

"Alex ain't no enemy, Mawruss," Abe said. "It's Aaron what's the enemy. Alex don't trouble himself at all. He told me so himself. But that's the way it goes, Mawruss. Mosha Kronberg, Hillel Kronberg, and Elkan Kronberg was three brothers which you don't see nowadays at all — more like friends than brothers, Mawruss. Hillel died ten years ago and I thought it would broke Mosha's heart. He looked after Hillel's widow and Hillel's boy, Alex, because Mosha never married, Mawruss. He was a born uncle. Then, when Elkan died a year later, I never seen a feller so broke up like Mosha in all my life. He goes to work and sends Elkan's boy, Aaron, to business college, and Elkan's widow he takes to live with Hillel's widow, all together with himself and the two boys in that house of his on Madison Street. For three years they lived that way, and in the rest of the house Mosha couldn't keep any tenants at all. At last he gives Aaron a couple thousand

dollars and Alex the same, and Aaron buys a store up in Port Sullivan, and Alex goes up to Bridgetown."

"What become of the widows, Abe?" Morris asked.

"I don't know is Elkan's widow living now *oder* not," Abe said, "but Mosha told me Hillel's widow wants to get married again, and Alex comes to him and says he should give the old lady anyhow a thousand dollars. Mosha wants to know what for, and Alex tells him he owes from Hillel's estate yet a couple thousand dollars."

"And did he?" Morris inquired.

"Suppose he did?" Abe replied. "He is entitled to it after what he puts up with during them three years they lived together. Well, Mosha and Alex gets right away fighting about it, and I guess Alex would of sued Mosha in the courts yet, only the old lady goes to work and dies on 'em all of a sudden."

"But why is Aaron and Alex such enemies, Abe?" Morris asked.

"Well, it's like this, Mawruss: Aaron and Alex is good friends until Uncle Mosha cut Alex out of his will. You see Aaron and Alex is the only two relations which Mosha got at all. So naturally when Aaron thinks he is coming in for the whole thing he begins to get sore at Alex, and the more Aaron thinks that the old man really ought to leave half to Alex, the more he gets sore at Alex."

"The whole business is dead wrong, Abe,"

Morris commented. "In the first place, the old man ain't got no right to leave his money only to Aaron; and in the second place, Aaron ain't got no right to feel sore at Alex. And furthermore Alex ought to go round and see his uncle oncet in a while when he is in New York, in the third place."

"Well, why don't you tell him so this afternoon, Mawruss?" Abe said. "Alex is staying up at the Prince Clarence since last night already, and he said he would be sure down here this afternoon."

"I will do so," Morris replied firmly.

"Go ahead," Abe added, "only one thing I got to tell you, Mawruss. There is some customers which would stand anything, Mawruss. You could ship 'em two garments short in every order; you could send 'em goods which ain't no more like the sample than bread is like *motsos;* you could overcharge 'em in your statements; you could even draw on 'em one day after their account is due, and still they would buy goods of you; but so soon as you start to butt into their family affairs, Mawruss, that's the finish, Mawruss. They would leave you like a shot."

"Alex Kronberg wouldn't take it so particular," Morris retorted. "He knows I am only doing it for his own good."

"Oh, if you are only doing it for his own good, Mawruss, then that's something again," Abe said; "because in that case we would not only lose him

for a customer, Mawruss, but we would also make an enemy of him for life."

"You shouldn't worry," Morris replied as he put on his hat preparatory to going out to lunch. "I know how to take care of a customer all right."

Nevertheless Morris cogitated his partner's advice throughout the entire lunch hour, and over his dessert he commenced to formulate a tentative plan for restoring Alex Kronberg to his inheritance.

Two cups of coffee and a second helping of *mohn* cake aided the process of celebrating this scheme, so that when Morris returned to his place of business it was nearly two o'clock.

"Abe," he said as he entered, "I've been thinking over this here matter about Alex Kronberg, and I ain't going to talk to Alex about it at all. Do you know what I'm going to do?"

Abe grabbed his hat and turned to Morris with a savage glare.

"Sure, I know what you are going to do, Mawruss," Potash bellowed belligerently. "Henceforth, from to-morrow on, you are going to do this, Mawruss: you are going to lunch after I am coming back. I could drop dead from hunger already for all you care. I got a stomach too, Mawruss, and don't you forget it."

Mosha Kronberg lived on the ground floor of his own tenement house on Madison Street, and to say

that Aaron Kronberg worshipped the ground his uncle walked on would be to utter the literal truth.

"Well, uncle, how do you feel to-day?" Aaron inquired the morning after Abe and Morris had so thoroughly discussed the Kronberg family relations.

"I could feel a whole lot better, Aaron, and I could feel a whole lot worse," Mosha Kronberg replied. "Them suckers has been after me again."

"Which ones are they now?" Aaron asked, his curiosity aroused.

"An orphan asylum," Mosha replied. "The gall which some people got it, Aaron, honestly you wouldn't believe it at all. They want me I should give 'em two hundred and fifty dollars. I told 'em time enough when I would die, *Gott soll hüten.*"

"What are you talking nonsense, Uncle Mosha?" Aaron broke in. "You ain't going to die for a long time yet; and anyhow, Uncle Mosha, if people goes to work and has children which they couldn't support while they are living even, why should they get any of your money to support 'em after you are dead? No one asks them suckers they should have children. Ain't I right?"

"Sure you are right," Uncle Mosha agreed. "Hospitals also, Aaron. If I got one hospital bothering me, I must got a dozen. Why should I bother myself with hospitals, Aaron? A lowlife, a gambler, hangs around liquor saloons all times of the night till he gets sick, y'understand, and then

he must go to a hospital and get well on my money yet. I see myself!"

"What hospital was it?"Aaron inquired.

"The Mount Hebron Hospital," Uncle Mosha replied. "There is the catalogue now. They are sending it me this morning only."

Aaron seized the annual report and list of donating members of the hospital and opened it at the letter K.

"Do you know what I think, uncle?" Aaron cried. "I think that Alex Kronberg puts 'em up to asking you for money."

"Alex puts 'em up to it?" Mosha repeated. "What for should Alex do such a thing?"

"Here; let me show you," Aaron cried. "Alex himself gives them fakers five dollars. Here it is in black on white: 'Alex Kronberg, Bridgetown, Pennsylvania, five dollars.'"

Uncle Mosha adjusted a pair of eyeglasses to his broad, flat nose and perused the record of his nephew's extravagance with bulging eyes.

"Well, what d'ye think for a sucker like that!" he exclaimed.

"I tell you the honest truth, uncle," Aaron said, "I don't want to say nothing about Alex at all, but the way that feller is acting, just because he does a little good business in his store, honestly it's a disgrace. He sends my mother for ten dollars a birthday present too. Do I need that sucker he

should give my mother birthday presents? He is throwing away his money left and right, and the first thing you know he is coming to you borrowing yet."

"He should save himself the trouble," Uncle Mosha declared. "His tongue should be hanging out of his mouth with hunger, Aaron, and I wouldn't give him *oser* one cent."

Aaron's face broke into a thousand wrinkles as he beamed his satisfaction.

"Well, uncle," he said, "I must got to be going. I got a whole lot of things to do to-day. Take care of yourself."

"Don't worry about me," Aaron's Uncle Mosha replied. "I could take care of myself all right. You wouldn't drink maybe a glass of *schnaps* or something before you go? No? All right."

He always delayed his proffer of hospitality until Aaron was on the front stoop. After the latter had turned the corner of Pike Street, Uncle Mosha lingered to take the morning air. A fresh breeze from the southwest brought with it a faint odour of salt herring and onions from the grocery store next door, while from the bakery across the street came the fragrant evidence of a large batch of *Kümmel brod.* He sighed contentedly and turned to reënter the house, but even as he did so he wheeled about in response to the greeting: "How do you do, Mr. Kronberg?"

The speaker was none other than Morris Perlmutter, who had tossed on his pillow until past midnight devising a plan for approaching Uncle Mosha in a plausible manner. Now that his quarry had fallen so opportunely within his grasp, Morris's face wreathed itself in smiles of such amiability that Uncle Mosha grew at once suspicious.

"You got the advantage from me," he said.

"Why, don't you know me?" Morris cooed.

"I think," Uncle Mosha replied guardedly, "I seen you oncet before somewheres. You are a collector for a hospital or a orphan asylum, or some such sucker game. Ain't it?"

Morris laughed mirthlessly. His discarded plan for renewing his acquaintance with Uncle Mosha had involved the pretence that he was seeking to interest the old gentleman in the Home for Chronic Invalids, Independent Order Mattai Aaron, of which fraternity Morris was an active member; and Uncle Mosha's apparent distaste for organized charity proved rather disconcerting.

"You're a poor guesser, Mr. Kronberg," he said.

"Then you are connected with some charity. Ain't it?" Uncle Mosha continued.

Morris denied it indignantly.

"*Gott soll hüten*," he said. "My name is Mr. Perlmutter and I am in the cloak and suit business."

"Oh, I remember now!" Uncle Mosha cried.

The news that Morris was no charity worker restored him to high good-humour.

"I remember you perfect now," he said, shaking hands effusively with Morris. "You got a partner by the name Potash, ain't it?"

"That's right," Morris replied.

"And what brings you over here in this *nachbarschaft?*" Uncle Mosha inquired.

Morris looked from Uncle Mosha to the tarnished brass plate on the side of the tenement-house door. It read as follows:

M. KRONBERG
REAL ESTATE

"The fact is," Morris said, "I am coming to see you in a business way, and if you got time I'd like to say a little something to you."

"Come inside," Uncle Mosha grunted. He thought he discerned a furtive timidity in his visitor's manner strongly indicative of an impending touch.

"In the first place," he began, after Morris was seated, "I ain't got so much money which people think I got it."

"I never thought you did," said Morris, and Uncle Mosha glared in response.

"But I ain't no beggar neither, y'understand," he retorted. "I got a little something left, anyhow."

"Sure, I know," Morris agreed; "but what you have got or what you ain't got is neither here or there. I am coming over this morning to ask you something, a question."

Here he paused. He had not yet determined what the question would be, and it occurred to him that, unless it were sufficiently momentous to account for his presence on the lower East Side during the busiest hours of a business day, Uncle Mosha would show him the door.

"Go ahead and ask it, then," Uncle Mosha broke in impatiently. "I couldn't sit here all day."

"The fact is," Morris said slowly, and then his mind reverted to the brass plate on the door and he at once proceeded with renewed confidence — "the fact is I am coming over here to ask you something, a question which a friend of mine would like to buy a property on the East Side."

"A property," Uncle Mosha repeated. "A property is something else again. What for a property would your friend like to buy it?"

"A fine property," Morris replied; "a property like you got it here."

"But this here property ain't for sale," Uncle Mosha said. "I got the house here now since 1890 already, and I guess I would keep it."

"Sure, I know; that's all right," Morris went on; "but I thought, even if you wouldn't want to sell the house, you know such a whole lot about real

estate, Mr. Kronberg, you could help us out a little."

The hard lines about Uncle Mosha's mouth relaxed into a smile.

"Well, when it comes to real estate," he said, "I ain't a fool exactly, y'understand."

"That's what I was told," Morris continued. "A friend of mine he says to me: 'If any one could tell you about real estate, Mosha Kronberg could. There's a man,' he says, 'which his opinion you could trust in it anything what he says is so. If the Astors and the Goelets would know about East Side real estate what that feller knows — understand me — instead of their hundreds of millions they would have thousands of millions already.'"

Uncle Mosha fairly beamed.

"Yes, Mr. Kronberg," Morris went on, without taking breath, "he says to me: 'You should go and see Uncle Mosha; he's a gentleman and he would treat you right.' 'But,' I says to him, 'I ain't got no right to butt in on your Uncle Mosha. You see, Alex,' I says ——"

"Alex!" Uncle Mosha cried. "Did Alex Kronberg send you here?"

"That's who it was," Morris replied.

"Then all I could say is," Uncle Mosha thundered, "you should go right back to Alex and tell him from me that I says any friend of his which

he comes to me looking for information about real estate, he's lucky I don't kick him into the street yet."

He jumped up from his chair and opened the door leading into the public hall.

"Go on," he roared, "out from my house."

Morris rose leisurely to his feet and pulled a large cigar from his pocket.

"If that's the way you feel about it, Mr. Kronberg," he said gently, "*schon gut.* I wouldn't bother you any more. At the same time, Mr. Kronberg, if ever you should want to sell the house, y'understand, let me know; that's all." As he passed out of the door he laid the cigar on a side table and its bright red band immediately caught the eye of Uncle Mosha. He pounced on it and was about to hurl it after his departing visitor when something about the smoothness of the wrapper made him pause. Five minutes later he lolled back in a horsehair-covered rocker and puffed contentedly at Morris's cigar. "After all," he said, "I might get a good price for the house anyway."

From Mosha Kronberg's tenement nouse on Madison Street to the cloak and suit district, at Nineteenth Street and Fifth Avenue, is less than two miles as the crow flies, but Morris Perlmutter's journey uptown was accomplished in less direct fashion. He spent over half an hour in an anti-

quated horse car and by the time the Broadway car to which he transferred had reached Madison Square it was nearly twelve o'clock. As he walked down Nineteenth Street he almost collided with Abe, whose face wore a frown.

"Say, lookyhere, Mawruss!" he cried. "What kind of business is this? Here you are just getting downtown and I am going out to lunch already."

"Sure, I know," Morris retorted. "You think of nothing but your stomach. Believe me, Abe, I worked hard enough this morning."

"Worked nothing!" Abe rejoined. "You have been up to some monkey business, Mawruss; otherwise why should Mosha Kronberg telephone us just now he thought the matter over since you left there and he would be up to see you this afternoon already."

"What!" Morris cried. "Did Mosha Kronberg telephone that himself?"

"All right, Mawruss; then I am a liar!" Abe exploded. "I am telling you with my own ears I heard him."

"I believe you, Abe," Morris said soothingly. "Don't hurry back from your lunch. I got lots of time."

"I would hurry back *oder* not, as I please, Mawruss," Abe retorted as he trudged off toward Hammersmith's restaurant. There he ministered to his outraged feelings with a steaming dish of

gefüllte rinderbrust, and it was not till he had sopped up the last drop of gravy with a piece of rye bread that he became conscious of a stranger sitting opposite to him.

"Excuse me," said the latter, "you got a little soup on the lapel of your coat."

"That ain't soup," Abe explained, as he dipped his napkin in his glass of ice-water and started to remove the stain; "that's a little *gefüllte rinderbrust*, which they fix it so thin and watery nowadays it might just as well be soup the way it's always getting over your clothes."

"Things ain't the same like they used to be," the stranger remarked. "Twenty—twenty-five years ago a feller could get a meal down on Canal Street for a quarter — understand me — which it was really something you could say was remarkable. Take any of them places, Gifkin's *oder* Wasserbauer's. Ain't I right?"

"Did you used to went to Gifkin's?" Abe asked.

"I should say!" his vis-à-vis replied. "When I was a boy of fifteen I am eating always regularly by Gifkin's."

"Me too. I used to eat a whole lot by Gifkin's," Abe said; "in fact, I think I must of seen you there."

"I shouldn't wonder," the stranger continued. "At the time I was working by old man Baum right across from Gifkin's. He was my uncle already."

"You are old man Baum's nephew!" Abe exclaimed. "How could that be? Old man Baum only got one brother, Nathan, which he got mixed up in a railroad accident near Knoxville. He was always up to some monkey business, that feller, *olav hasholom.*"

"Sure, I know," the stranger continued; "but old man Baum got also one sister, my mother, Mrs. Gershon. You must remember my father, Sam Gershon. Works for years by Richter as a cutter. My name is Mr. Max Gershon."

"Why, sure I do!" Abe said, shaking hands with his new-found acquaintance. "So you are a son of old man Gershon? Do you live here in New York, Mr. Gershon?"

"No; I live in Johnsville, Texas," Mr. Gershon replied. "This is my first visit North in twenty-five years. Yes, Mr. — er ——"

"Potash," Abe said.

"Mr. Potash," Gershon continued, "I'm feeling pretty lonesome, I can tell you. All my folks is dead: my father, my mother, my two uncles; and there ain't a soul here in New York which remembers me at all."

"Is that so?" Abe commented, with ready sympathy.

"Yes, Mr. Potash," Gershon said, "when I was a boy I done a fool thing. When I was sixteen years old already I run away from home because

my father licked me; and I never wrote to 'em or sent no word to 'em until it was too late. You see, up to five years since, I didn't done so good. Everything seemed to went against me, Mr. Potash; but lately I am doing a fine business for a small place like Johnsville, and to-day I got the best store down there."

"You don't say so!" Abe cried.

"So I thought last month, instead I would go to Dallas or Forth Worth like I usually done, I would come straight on to New York and not only buy my fall goods but also give the old folks a surprise. And what do I find? Everybody is dead."

Mr. Gershon pressed a handkerchief to his eyes.

"You shouldn't take on so," Abe said, leaning across the table and placing his hand on Gershon's arm. "It's the way of the world, Mr. Gershon, and I could assure you we got the finest line of garments in our store, which it is first-class stuff, up to the minute, and prices and everything just right."

Mr. Gershon wiped his eyes.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Potash," he said. "My feelings is got the better of me."

"That's all right," Abe murmured. "Here is our card, and you should positively come up to see us. Even if you wouldn't buy from us a button, Mr. Gershon, it would be a pleasure for us to see you in our place."

"I would sure be there," Mr. Gershon said as he pocketed the card.

"Waiter," Abe called, "put this here gentleman's check on mine and bring us two of them thirty-cent cigars."

So eagerly did Morris await the advent of Uncle Mosha Kronberg in Potash & Perlmutter's store that he even omitted to notice his partner's prolonged absence at lunch; and when Abe returned to unfold the narrative of his meeting with a prospective customer Morris heard it without interest.

"The feller is A number one, Mawruss," Abe said. "I stopped off to see Sam Feder at the Kosciusko Bank, and Sam sent me to the Associated Information Bureau. He is rated twenty to thirty thousand; credit good."

"Yes?" Morris replied. "Tell me, Abe, did Mosha Kronberg say just when he would be here?"

"What are you wasting your time about Mosha Kronberg for?" Abe retorted. "We got enough to do we should pick out a few good styles to show Gershon."

Morris nodded absently. His thoughts were centred on a short old man with close-cropped beard who at that very moment was turning the corner of Fifth Avenue and Nineteenth Street. Simultaneously Aaron Kronberg ran across the

street from Sammet Brothers' doorway and clapped the old gentleman on the shoulder.

"Hello, Uncle Mosha!" he cried. "What are you doing around here?"

"Couldn't I come uptown oncet in a while if I would want to?" Uncle Mosha replied, somewhat testily.

"Sure, sure," Aaron Kronberg hastened to say. "Did you eat yet?"

"I never eat in the middle of the day," Uncle Mosha said. "I am up here on business."

"On business?" Aaron repeated. "What for business?"

"I think I sold the house," Mosha replied.

For one brief moment Aaron gazed at his uncle and then he linked his arm in that of the old man. "Come over to Twenty-third Street and drink anyhow a cup of coffee," he said, and ten minutes later they entered an enamelled brick dairy restaurant.

"You say you think you sold the house?" Aaron said, after a waitress had served them.

Uncle Mosha nodded. He was emptying a cup of coffee in long, noisy inhalations and at the same time consuming cheese sandwiches with uncommonly keen appetite — for a man who never ate in the middle of the day.

"Yes, Aaron," Uncle Mosha said, as he emerged all dripping from the cup, "I think I sold the house, and I guess I would have another cup coffee."

"Go ahead," Aaron replied. "But what for you want to sell the house, Uncle Mosha? It brings you in anyhow a good income."

"A good income for some people, Aaron, but for me not. What is one thousand a year, Aaron?"

"One thousand a year, uncle, is a whole lot, especially to a man like you, what lives simple."

"My living expenses is very little, I admit, Aaron," Uncle Mosha replied, after he had disposed of the second cup of coffee with noises approximating a bathtubful of soapy water disappearing down the wastepipe. "I don't make no fuss about my living, Aaron, but you got to remember, Aaron, that a man couldn't live on living expenses alone. Oncet in a while a feller likes to take a little flyer in the market and try and make a few dollars. Ain't it?"

"What!" Aaron exclaimed. This was a phase of his uncle's character that had never been exposed before.

"Yes, Aaron," Uncle Mosha continued; "living ain't only having a room to sleep in and food to eat, Aaron. Other things is living, Aaron. Stocks is living and auction pinocle is also living, and going oncet in a while on theayter is living too, Aaron. I may be an old man, Aaron, but I ain't dead yet."

Aaron's pale face grew almost ghastly at these shocking disclosures, and when Uncle Mosha

concluded his audacious creed with a furtive wink his nephew visibly started.

"But you got plenty other money to invest in the stock market without you would sell the house, Uncle Mosha," he said.

"Have I?" Uncle Mosha rejoined. "That's news to me, Aaron. You see in nineteen-seven was a big panic and some stocks is better as others. Them which ain't, Aaron, they went and gone so low, Aaron, they ain't never come back again and perhaps never will. Might you heard something about it in Port Sullivan maybe? Ten thousand dollars I dropped on them suckers down in Wall Street, Aaron."

Uncle Mosha smiled blandly at his nephew, who grasped the edge of the table to steady his whirling senses.

"But what's the use talking," Uncle Mosha continued. "What is *vorbei* is *vorbei;* and I guess I would have another cup of coffee."

"You had enough coffee," Aaron cried sternly. "So you gone and dropped your money on stocks, hey?"

Uncle Mosha shrugged and extended one palm in philosophic resignation.

"It was my own money, Aaron," he said. "I didn't stole it."

"This ain't no time for making jokes, Uncle Mosha," Aaron retorted. "Who was it you was going to sell the house to?"

"Maybe you know him," Uncle Mosha said. "It's a feller by the name Mawruss Perlmutter."

Aaron Kronberg's pallor gave way to a flood of crimson, and for a moment he choked incoherently as he gazed at Uncle Mosha in amazement.

"Why, that feller Perlmutter is a friend of Alex," he gasped at length.

"Sure, I know," Uncle Mosha replied; "but even if he is a friend of Alex his money ain't counterfeit."

"But he'd rob you of your shirt, Uncle Mosha," Aaron exclaimed. "He's a dangerous feller."

"I'm used to dangerous fellers, Aaron," Uncle Mosha answered calmly. "I told you before, I dropped ten thousand in Wall Street."

"Yes; and if you would sold this here house, Uncle Mosha, you would drop ten thousand more."

"Not ten thousand, Aaron. I only got eight thousand equity in the house."

Again Aaron stared at his uncle.

"Do you mean to told me you only got eight thousand dollars in the world?" he groaned.

"The world is a pretty big place, Aaron," Uncle Mosha said; "but I wouldn't lie to you anyhow. Eight thousand is the figure."

"Then all I could say is, Uncle Mosha, before you would got to go begging on the streets yet, you would better sell that house and come to live with me up in Port Sullivan."

Uncle Mosha shrugged once more.

"I'll tell you the truth, Aaron," he said; "I was going to suggest that to you myself yet. So let's go right off and see this here Perlmutter and we'll talk about Port Sullivan later."

"Not by a damsite," Aaron declared, as he rose from his chair and grasped his uncle firmly by the arm. "You come with me and we'll sell this house to a feller I know."

When Max Gershon entered the salesroom of Potash & Perlmutter that afternoon, Abe treated the incident as though it were the arrival of an intimate friend after an absence of many years' duration.

"How are you feeling now, Max?" he said, and then he introduced his partner. "Mawruss," he called, "this is my friend, Mr. Max Gershon. Get the cigars from the safe, Mawruss."

After he had relieved his visitor of his hat and coat he drew forward a comfortable chair and literally thrust Max into it.

"Well, Max," Abe said, after the cigars had gone around, "I sure am glad to see you. Mawruss, don't he look like his uncle, old man Baum?"

Morris regarded Max critically for a moment.

"Old man Baum was a pretty good-looking feller, Abe," he said, "but he wasn't so tall as Mr. Gershon; otherwise they are the same identical people."

"Never mind his looks," Max said, beaming. "If I should have only his business ability I would be satisfied."

"He made plenty money in his time," Morris commented.

"Yes, and lost it again too," Max added; "but what's the use talking? Money I ain't in need of exactly, y'understand."

"You need goods, Max," Abe said. "Is that it?"

"Well, I do and I don't, Abe," Max replied. "The fact is, Abe, I got a good business down in Johnsville, but I couldn't extend it none on account the place ain't big enough. Former times that was all cattle country around there, and now it's all truck farms and cotton, and what sort of business could a drygoods merchant do with cotton hands? Ain't I right?"

Abe nodded.

"I tell you the honest truth, Abe," Max continued. "I would like to sell out and come North. I got an idee if I would find some hustling young feller up here which he got a good department store — good but small, y'understand—in a live town, Abe, I would go with him as partners together, and we could extend the business and make a good thing of it."

Abe looked at Morris and then he slapped his thigh with his open hand.

"By jimminy," he cried, "I got the very thing for you, Max."

Morris gazed at his partner with raised eyebrows and then he too slapped his thigh.

"Alex Kronberg!" he exclaimed.

"That's the feller," Abe said. "There's a man, Max, which he is honest like the day and smart as a cutting machine. I know him since he was a baby, y'understand, and he's worked his way up till now he's got a fine business in Bridgetown. Only yesterday he says to me if he could get a live partner with a little capital, y'understand, he would soon got the biggest store in Bridgetown."

"What for a town is Bridgetown?" Max asked.

"Bridgetown is all right, Max," Abe said. "I give you my word, Max, they got so many factories there which they burn soft coal, on the brightest days you couldn't see the sun at all. It is an elegant place, Max."

"And what is more, Max," Morris added, "only last Saturday night, Alex tells me, the store was so crowded two saleswomen fainted."

"It sounds good," Max admitted. "Who did you say owns the store?"

"Alex Kronberg," Morris replied.

"Kronberg — Kronberg," Max repeated. "The name sounds familiar. When did you say he would be here?"

"He ought to be in here every minute," Abe said. Hardly had he spoken when the elevator door clanged and Alex himself entered.

He glistened with perspiration, and his round, good-humoured face bore a broad grin.

"Phoo-ee!" he cried. "I'm all heated up."

"What's the trouble, Alex?" Morris asked.

"I just run into Aaron and Uncle Mosha coming out of a coffee house, and the way them two suckers cussed me out, Mawruss! — you wouldn't believe it at all. I couldn't understand what they was talking about, Mawruss, but they mentioned your name and something about Mosha's house on Madison Street."

Abe glared at Morris and then turned to Alex with a forced smile.

"Don't you bother yourself about them fellers, Alex," he said.

"What do I care for 'em, Abe?" Alex replied. "I got my own troubles."

"Sure," Morris broke in; "but what did they say about the house, Alex?"

"So far what I could hear, Mawruss, Aaron says you are trying to buy from Mosha the house."

"No such thing, Alex, believe me," Abe interrupted.

"But Aaron says he's already got a customer for the house," Alex went on; "and who d'ye think it is?"

Abe wiped his forehead with his handkerchief and continued to glare at Morris.

"I don't know who it is," Abe said, "and, what's

more, I don't care. I want to introduce you to a friend of mine, Alex. This is Mr. Max Gershon, from Johnsville, Texas."

"I'm pleased to meetcher, Mr. Gershon," Alex replied. "Yes, Mawruss, Aaron says he sold the house already, and who d'ye think he sold it to?"

Morris made an inarticulate noise which he intended as an expression of curiosity.

"A friend of yours by the name Leon Sammet," Alex Kronberg said.

"You see how it is?" Aaron Kronberg said to his Uncle Mosha as they passed down Fifth Avenue after their encounter with Alex. "You see how it is? The feller is a desperate character, Uncle Mosha. You couldn't make him mad even."

"A lowlife!" Uncle Mosha cried, shaking his head from side to side. "His mother before him was just such another like him. I could spit blood hollering at that woman and she wouldn't answer me back at all."

"Well, now you got it," Aaron retorted triumphantly; "and so, if you would start to sell your house to his friend Perlmutter, the least that happens to you is they would do you for the whole thing."

"Maybe you're right," Uncle Mosha admitted.

"And so I am going to take you over to see a friend of mine by the name Leon Sammet," Aaron

continued, "and if you want to leave the thing to me, Uncle Mosha, I am certain sure I could get you a good price for the house."

"Certain sure nobody could be of getting a good price for a house in these times, Aaron," Uncle Mosha said. "Real estate on the East Side is 'way down, Aaron. The subway ruins everything."

"I don't care about subways nor nothing," Aaron cried. "I would get you what you want for that house. What would you consider a good price for the house, uncle?"

"A very good price would be forty-two two-fifty," Uncle Mosha replied; "but me I would be willing to accept forty thousand."

"Well, lookyhere," Aaron commenced; "I'm going to do this for you, Uncle Mosha. I'm going to get Leon Sammet to give you not forty thousand or forty-two two-fifty neither. I'm going to get Leon Sammet to give you forty-three thousand for the house, uncle, but I only do it on one condition, uncle."

"And what is that?" Uncle Mosha asked.

"I would do it for you only on condition you come to live with me at Port Sullivan," Aaron concluded; "and also you must give me, to take care of it for you, all the cash money you get for the house."

Uncle Mosha frowned as he drew from his pocket a small packet wrapped in newspaper. This he

proceeded to unwrap until there was exposed the unburnt half of a large black cigar. It was all that remained of Morris Perlmutter's gift and Uncle Mosha carefully knocked the ash off before he put it in his mouth.

"Why don't you answer me?" Aaron asked.

"I got to think, ain't I?" Uncle Mosha mumbled as he paused to light up. He puffed away in silence until they had nearly reached the entrance to Sammet Brothers' place of business

"*Schon gut*, Aaron," Uncle Mosha said at length. "I will do it with this here exception: I would sell the house for forty-three thousand dollars, subject to a first mortgage of twenty-five thousand dollars, and a second mortgage of ninety-two hundred and fifty dollars. That leaves eighty-seven hundred and fifty dollars balance, ain't it?"

Aaron nodded.

"Then this here Sammet is to pay seven hundred and fifty dollars cash on signing the contract and eight thousand dollars on closing the title," Uncle Mosha declared; "and the exception is that you should take care of the eight thousand dollars, but the seven hundred and fifty dollars belongs to me and I could do what I like with it."

For ten minutes Aaron argued with his uncle in front of Sammet Brothers' building, but all to no purpose, for Uncle Mosha remained unmoved. Either he was to receive the seven hundred and

fifty dollars on the signing of the contract or the entire deal was off; and at length he prevailed.

"All right," Aaron said, "you shall have the seven hundred and fifty, but one thing you must got to do. When we go into Leon Sammet's loft I want you to let me and Leon speak a few words, something alone together. Are you agreeable?"

"Sure, why not?" Uncle Mosha agreed. "You got to work the feller up to buying the house, ain't yer?"

Aaron nodded gloomily as they entered the elevator, and when it stopped at Sammet Brothers' floor he strode out so rapidly that Uncle Mosha, who had never before visited Sammet Brothers', hardly noticed his nephew's exit. Before he could follow Aaron the elevator attendant slammed the door, and it was not reopened until Uncle Mosha had expressed his agitation in a burst of spirited profanity.

"Did you see that, Aaron?" he exclaimed after he had caught up to his nephew. "I come pretty close to getting killed just now in that there elevator."

"Why don't you keep your eyes open?" Aaron asked callously. "Now you sit down here and wait until I am coming out."

He entered Leon Sammet's private office, and as soon as Uncle Mosha found himself alone in the showroom he clenched the butt of his cigar between

his yellow teeth and explored his pockets for pencil and paper. Having found them, he was soon plunged in a maze of figures representing the profit in going short of seven hundred shares on a one-point margin, assuming that the market dropped eight points in ten days.

"Hallo, Aaron," Leon Sammet cried when he caught sight of the younger Kronberg.

Aaron nodded, with half-closed eyes.

"Sit down, Aaron," Leon continued; "you look worried."

"I bet yer," Aaron replied. "What d'ye think of that sucker?"

"What 's Alex been doing now?" Leon asked.

"Alex! What d'ye mean, Alex?" Aaron said. "Alex I ain't worrying about at all. I mean Uncle Mosha Kronberg."

Forthwith he unfolded to Leon the sum of his uncle's iniquities, sparing no detail of his own well-nigh ruined prospects and ending with an account of Uncle Mosha's interrupted deal with Morris Perlmutter.

Leon slammed the top of his desk with his open hand.

"Before I would let that shark, Perlmutter, get the house I would buy it myself."

"Sure, I know!" Aaron replied. "I thought you would, Leon; but that ain't necessary. All I want you to do is this, Leon. I told the old man

I could get you to buy the house for forty-three thousand dollars."

"Forty-three thousand?" Leon exclaimed. "Why that house ain't worth forty-three thousand!"

"What do I care what it's worth?" Aaron replied. "The game is this, Leon. You will buy the house for me — Aaron — with my money. You got to pay seven hundred and fifty cash on signing the contract, and the balance of eight thousand dollars above the mortgages you got to pay when the title is closed. I fixed it with the old man that he is to give me the eight thousand dollars to take care of for him — see? So, when the title is closed I will give you eight thousand dollars to give Mosha, and Mosha will turn it back to me; and, Leon, if he ever sees that eight thousand dollars again it won't be this side of the grave."

Leon nodded.

"Meantime you've got the house," he said.

"Exactly," Aaron replied. "I get the house. All it cost me is seven hundred and fifty dollars cash, and I also get unloaded on me for the rest of his life the old man. And while I don't wish him any harm, y'understand, *Gott soll hüten* anything should happen to him Leon, it couldn't come too soon for me."

"I bet yer," Leon said fervently. "And now let's get him in here and we'll all go down to Henry D. Feldman's office and fix the matter up."

Two hours later Leon and Uncle Mosha had signed a contract for the sale of the Madison Street house, title to be closed and deed to be delivered within thirty days. The purchase price was stated to be forty-three thousand dollars, payable as follows: thirty-four thousand two hundred and fifty dollars by the vendee taking the house subject to mortgages aggregating that amount, seven hundred and fifty dollars cash on signing the contract, and the balance of eight thousand dollars in cash or certified check at the closing of the title.

Prior to leaving his office Leon had cashed Aaron Kronberg's check for seven hundred and fifty dollars, and the money, in bills of large denomination, was turned over to Mosha Kronberg, who tucked them carefully away in his breast pocket.

"Well, Aaron," he said after the operation was completed, "I guess I'll be going back to Madison Street."

"Wait; I'll go along with you," Aaron cried.

"Don't you trouble yourself," Uncle Mosha declared with a confidential wink at Leon Sammet and Henry D. Feldman; "I could take care of myself all right."

"What are you going to do with all that money, Mr. Kronberg?" Leon asked as Uncle Mosha turned to leave. The old man paused with his hand on the door, and once more he favoured his questioner with a significant wink.

"Leave that to me," he said.

The thirty days succeeding Morris Perlmutter's visit to Madison Street were busy ones for all the Kronbergs. Alex had accompanied Max Gershon to Bridgetown, where conditions more than fulfilled Abe's glowing account, and the formation of the Kronberg-Gershon Drygoods Company proceeded without delay. As for Aaron Kronberg, he found that the borrowing of eight thousand dollars, even for so short a period as would be necessary to consummate the Madison Street deal, was no easy task. At length he raised the sum by paying a large bonus to his bankers in Port Sullivan, and it was deposited to the credit of Sammet Brothers four days before the closing of title.

Meantime Uncle Mosha had not neglected the opportunity afforded him during his last few days of liberty. With his seven hundred and fifty dollars he had sought the brokerage offices of Klinkberg & Company the morning after signing his contract with Leon Sammet. There he selected American Chocolate and Cocoa as the medium of his speculation and promptly went short of seven hundred on a one-point margin. The same afternoon he was within a sixteenth of being wiped out when the market turned, and nearly one month later he took his profit of twenty-one hundred dollars, which with the original investment, minus the brokerage amounted to twenty-eight hundred dollars.

"Never no more," he said to the brokerage firm's

cashier as he drew his profit. "I am through oncet and for all. No one could get me to touch another share of stock so long as I live."

With this solemn declaration he passed out of Klinkberg & Company's office just as a short stout man burst into the hall from a door marked "Customers."

"Wow!" the short stout man exclaimed.

"*Warum* wow?" Uncle Mosha asked.

"Amalgamated Refineries goes up four points on six sales in half an hour," the short stout man replied, "and I win two thousand."

The short stout man started down the hall and executed a fantastic dancing step in front of the elevators, while Uncle Mosha entered the door marked "Customers."

"Mr. Klinkberg," he said, handing Klinkberg & Company's two thousand eight hundred dollar check to that firm's senior partner, "buy me one thousand shares Amalgamated Refineries at the market."

An hour later he walked leisurely along Madison Street, and as he approached his own doorway Aaron Kronberg swooped down upon him.

"Uncle Mosha," he almost screamed, "where was you?"

"Where was I?" Uncle Mosha replied. "Why, I was where I was. That's where I was. What difference does it make to you where I was?"

"What difference does it make to me?" Aaron cried. "Ain't I putting up the — er — don't you know you was due at Henry D. Feldman's office to close your title at one o'clock? — and here it is half-past one already!"

For a minute Uncle Mosha's face fell. In the excitement of following the profitable course of his speculation he had completely forgotten his real-estate transaction, but he quickly recovered his composure.

"Oh, well," he said, "let 'em wait! The house won't run away, Aaron. Let's go and get a cup coffee somewheres."

"Coffee, nothing!" Aaron growled; "you're coming right along with me. I got a carriage waiting for you."

He hustled the old man into a decrepit conveyance that was drawn up to the curb and they started immediately for Henry D. Feldman's office.

"Honest, Aaron," Uncle Mosha sighed, "I feel like I was riding to my own funeral."

"Don't worry, Uncle Mosha," Aaron said; "with the *tzuris* which I got it lately you would quicker ride to mine."

"Well, Aaron," Uncle Mosha rejoined, "as old man Baum used to say, we all got to die sooner or later, Aaron; and all we could take with us is our good name."

"You wouldn't got to pay no excess baggage

rates on that," Aaron said as the carriage came to a stop in front of Feldman's office building.

Two minutes later they entered the offices of Henry D. Feldman and were ushered immediately into the presence of that distinguished advocate himself. As they passed through the doorway Feldman rose from his seat. He was not alone, for at one side of a long library table sat Leon Sammet, while opposite to him a tall, sandy-haired person methodically arranged various bundles of papers which he drew out of capacious pasteboard envelopes.

"Ah, gentlemen, you're here at last," Feldman cried. "Mr. Jones, this is Mr. Kronberg and his nephew, Mr. Aaron Kronberg. Mr. Jones is a representative of the Land Insurance & Title Guarantee Company, who at my request has examined the title to your house, Mr. Kronberg."

"All right," Uncle Mosha said; "I ain't scared of 'em. I owned the house since 1890 already — that's pretty near twenty years, and I ain't paid no Confederate money for it neither."

Mr. Jones cleared his throat noisily, and as he did so a round white object leaped from beneath his collar and bumped against his chin. It was his Adam's apple.

"Did you say you owned the house twenty years?" he inquired in tones of such profundity that Feldman was obliged to ask him to repeat his

question. At the second repetition Uncle Mosha said that it might be a month less than twenty years.

"The record shows that you bought the house a little more than nineteen years ago," Mr. Jones continued — his manner suggested a hanging judge in the act of assuming the black cap — "and therefore you could claim no adverse possession, even assuming there were no disabilities."

"What d'ye mean, claim?" Uncle Mosha asked with asperity. "I don't claim nothing. I already got seven hundred and fifty dollars and there is coming to me eight thousand dollars more."

"I think, Mr. Jones," Feldman interrupted, "I ought to explain to Mr. Kronberg the *locus in quo*."

Aaron Kronberg turned pale and wiped a few drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"What is there to explain, Mr. Feldman?" he broke in. "Go ahead and close the title to the property. I couldn't sit here all day."

"There's a great deal to be explained," Feldman continued. "He is unable to convey good title to the property *non constat* he received a deed of it in 1890."

"I never heard tell of the feller at all," Uncle Mosha exclaimed. "I am the only one which received a deed of the property."

Feldman gazed at Uncle Mosha for one dazed moment and then proceeded.

"The last owner in Mr. Kronberg's claim of title — I mean his immediate vendor — was the only surviving collateral of an intestate," he said.

"That's where you make a big mistake," Uncle Mosha interrupted. "The feller which I bought the house from was a salesman for a shirt concern."

Feldman glared at Uncle Mosha and was about to crush him with a flood of law Latin when the door opened.

"You got to excuse me for butting in, Mr. Feldman," said a harsh voice which presently was seen to issue from the person of Morris Perlmutter, "but me and my partner is got to get back to the store and Max and his partner is also busy to-day."

"I'll be with you in just one moment, Mr. Perlmutter," Feldman replied.

"You says that an hour ago," Morris grumbled as he closed the door behind him.

"Now, Mr. Kronberg," Feldman continued, "I'd like to elucidate this situation for you as succinctly as possible."

"Do that afterward, if you got to do it," Uncle Mosha broke in; "but just now tell me what the trouble is."

"What's the use talking to a mutt that don't understand the English language at all?" Feldman cried. "Listen here to me. You bought your house from a fellow called Nathan Baum."

"Sure, I did," Uncle Mosha said. "You remember

him, Sammet? He went to work and got killed in a railroad accident ten years ago already."

"Don't interrupt," Feldman cried. "Nathan Baum was the brother of Max Baum, a former owner of the house. Max Baum died while he owned the house and he left no will, and Nathan Baum claimed the house as the only heir of Max Baum."

"That's right," Mosha agreed. "Nathan Baum was the only relative in the world which Max Baum got it. He had a sister, but she died before Max."

"Was Max Baum's sister ever married?" Mr. Jones asked in funereal accents.

"Sure she was married," Mosha answered. "She was married to Sam Gershon. He works for years by Richter as a cutter. Sam is dead too."

"Did they ever have any children?" Mr. Jones inquired.

"One boy they had," Uncle Mosha said. "Shall I ever forget it? What a beautiful boy that was, Mr. Feldman — a regular picture! Mrs. Gershon thinks a whole lot of that boy, too, I bet yer."

"Never mind the trimmings, Kronberg," Feldman broke in. "Is the boy alive?"

"That's what we're anxious to know," Mr. Jones interrupted. "My company had ascertained that there was one son, but we couldn't find out if he were dead or alive."

"If the boy was alive Mrs. Gershon would be alive too," Mosha said. "Mrs. Gershon died on account of that boy. What a lovely boy that was! I can see him now — the way he looked. He had eyes black like coal, and a ——"

Here Uncle Mosha stopped short. His jaw dropped and his fishy gray eyes seemed to start from his head as he gazed at the door. It stood ajar some six inches and exposed the features of a person impatient to the point of frenzy.

"Ex-cuse me, Mr. Feldman!" said the intruder; "I may be a Rube from Texas, y'understand, but I got my feelings too, and unless you come in here right away and close the matter up me and my partner would go and get our agreement fixed up somewhere else again."

"I'll be with you in just one moment, Mr. Gershon," Feldman replied.

"Gershon?" Uncle Mosha muttered. "Gershon!"

He rose to his feet and tottered across the room toward the doorway, but at the threshold his strength failed him and he fell headlong to the floor.

In the scene of confusion that followed only Henry D. Feldman remained calm. He touched the electric button on his desk.

"Go down to the Algonquin Building and fetch a doctor," he said to the office-boy who responded, "and on your way out see if we have any blank

petitions for administration in the Surrogate's Court. If we haven't, buy a couple on your way back. The old man may not pull through."

When Uncle Mosha's eyes opened in consciousness of his surroundings they rested on Max Gershon, who bent over the old man as anxiously as did either of his nephews.

"Max Gershon, ain't it?" Uncle Mosha asked feebly.

Gershon nodded.

"You shouldn't try to talk," he said.

"I'm all right," Uncle Mosha replied. "I need only a cup coffee. If Aaron would let me got it before I come here this wouldn't never of happened."

Aaron recognized the justice of his uncle's criticism by personally seeking a nearby restaurant, and after an interval of ten minutes, during which Abe and Morris took turns with Max and Alex in fanning the patient, he returned with a pot of steaming coffee. Uncle Mosha drank three cups in rapid succession and heaved a great sigh.

"You ain't got maybe a cigar about you, Max?" he said.

"Smoke this, Uncle Mosha," Alex Kronberg cried, pulling a large satiny invincible from his waistcoat pocket and thrusting it at his uncle. For one hesitating minute the old man looked from Alex to the cigar, but at last its glossy perfection overcame his scruples.

"Much obliged, Alex," he said.

"That's all right," Alex mumbled as he struck a match. "How do you feel now, uncle?"

"First rate," Uncle Mosha replied as he blew out great clouds of smoke; "although I ought to feel a whole lot worse, Alex, when I see Maxie Gershon here. Twenty-five years ago I seen him last and he looks the same fat-faced feller with the black eyes. Only to think he now comes back and takes away half my house from me."

"I ain't come back to do no such thing!" Max cried. "I could assure you, Mr. Kronberg, although me and Alex Kronberg is going as partners together, I never knew until I seen you here that you was any relation of his. As for your house, Mr. Kronberg, I don't know nothing about it at all."

"Don't you?" Uncle Mosha exclaimed. "Well, I'll tell you. It's like this."

"*Stigun!*" Aaron hissed. "Don't open your mouth, Uncle Mosha."

"What d'ye mean, don't open my mouth?" Uncle Mosha retorted. "D'ye think I'm a crook? If I got a house which it don't belong to me at all, then I don't want it."

He turned his back on Aaron and straightway he narrated the full circumstances surrounding his purchase of the Madison Street house.

"Certainly I ain't no lawyer nor nothing," he continued, "but when old Max Baum died you was

due to get just as much as your Uncle Nathan out of his estate, and if Nathan Baum swindled me out of my money by claiming he owns the whole thing that couldn't give me no right to your share, ain't it?"

Max nodded.

"Then what ain't mine I don't want at all," Uncle Mosha continued; "and so, Maxie, you and me gives Leon Sammet here a deed of the house and Leon pays us the balance of eight thousand dollars. Out of that you get four thousand three hundred and seventy-five dollars, because me, I already got seven hundred and fifty dollars. Are you agreeable to fix it that way, Sammet?"

Leon looked at Aaron Kronberg, who was gulping convulsively in an effort to express adequately all he felt. At length he commenced to address his uncle in husky tones.

"You cut-throat!" he croaked. "You robber, you! You shed my blood! Give me back my seven hundred and fifty dollars."

"Your seven hundred and fifty!" Uncle Mosha exclaimed.

"That's what I said," Aaron went on. His voice rose to a hoarse scream as he proceeded. "Did you think any one else woud give forty-three thousand dollars for that dawg-house but me? Sammet ain't got nothing to do with it; he's only a dummy."

"So!" Leon Sammet said bitterly. "I am only a dummy, am I?"

"Wait one minute!" Uncle Mosha cried. "Do you mean to told me, Mr. Sammet, that you was buying this here house for Aaron?"

"Well, that's about the size of it," Leon admitted.

"Then what are you kicking about?" Uncle Mosha said. "You are a dummy."

Throughout the moving scenes of that entire afternoon Leon had acted the part of disinterested onlooker to the point of lethargy, but now he fairly glared at Uncle Mosha.

"I don't got to stay here to be called names," he said.

"My trouble's what you got to stay here for," Uncle Mosha retorted. "Yes, boys; what d'ye think for a highwayman like that Aaron Kronberg?"

Aaron blushed a fiery red.

"Come on, Leon," he said. "Let's get out of this."

"Hold on!" Max Gershon shouted. "Don't you do nothing of the kind, Sammet. Me and Mr. Mosha Kronberg we own this here house together, and he made a contract with you to sell you this here house which I stand by. Do you want to take it *oder* not? Because if not, we would keep your seven hundred and fifty dollars."

Leon Sammet emitted a huge guffaw.

"That worries me a whole lot," he replied. "As Aaron just told you, the seven hundred and fifty belongs to him."

"Very true," Feldman interrupted, "but it was

you who engaged me to examine the title, Mr. Sammet, and my fees and disbursements in this matter amount to five hundred dollars."

Leon Sammet sat down again.

"Come on, Leon," Aaron cried. "What are you waiting for?"

"Do you mean to told me, Mr. Feldman, I owe you five hundred dollars?" Leon asked.

"Five hundred and eight dollars and forty-two cents to be exact," said Feldman, crunching a slip of paper.

"Then all I got to say is," Leon declared, "I got here a certified check for eight thousand dollars which Aaron Kronberg gives me, and I would sure hold it until he secures me against your bill."

"Say, lookyhere, boys," Alex Kronberg said at length, "I've been listening to all this here Megillah and I ain't said a word nor nothing. But I'll tell you what I'll do. It's a cinch that Uncle Mosha won't go to live with Aaron now, so I'll take him to live with me."

"I am agreeable," said Uncle Mosha.

"Furthermore," Alex continued, "Uncle Mosha and Max will keep the house. I will also pay Mr. Feldman his five hundred dollars and take it out of the seven hundred and fifty which Aaron paid Uncle Mosha. The balance of two hundred and fifty Aaron shall have back again."

"I am content," Uncle Mosha replied. "I

don't want none of Aaron's money; and you could take it from me, Alex, Aaron would never see none of my money."

"And now, gentlemen, let us fix up this copartnership agreement," Max Gershon said as Aaron Kronberg slunk out of the office, followed by Leon Sammet. "Mr. Potash and Mr. Perlmutter have wasted pretty near the whole afternoon here."

"That's all right," Abe said. "I don't consider we wasted any time. Many a night I threw away four dollars taking a customer on the theayter yet, when the show wasn't near so good as what we seen it this afternoon; and the customer ain't bought no goods off me anyhow."

"Don't you worry yourself about that, Abe!" Max cried. "You got a couple of customers at this show which they would buy goods from you so long as we are in business, and don't you forget it. Ain't I right, Alex?"

Alex nodded.

"Come on, Uncle Mosha," he said. "Come inside with us and see this through."

"I'll wait out here," Uncle Mosha replied. "I got enough excitement for one afternoon."

He waited until Mr. Jones, of the title company, had packed up his papers, and then after Henry D. Feldman had followed the others into the adjoining room and had closed the door behind him, Uncle Mosha touched the button on Feldman's desk.

"Go out and buy for me an evening paper," he said to the boy who responded.

"Say," the boy replied, "there was a doctor waiting to see you for more than half an hour."

"Tell him to wait a little longer yet," Mosha rejoined. "I may got to have him after I am seeing the paper."

"He ain't here now," the boy said. "He went away and says you should send him a check for five dollars."

"I hope he don't need the money for nothing particular," Uncle Mosha commented; "on account he stands a good show to be disappointed. Hurry up with the paper."

Ten minutes afterward the boy returned. He handed an evening paper to Uncle Mosha, who hastily planted a pair of pince-nez on his broad, flat nose and folded back the financial page.

"Now let's give a look," he murmured to himself as he glanced hastily at the column marked "The Stock Market."

At the head of the list appeared the following item:

Sales	Highest	Lowest	Closing	Net Ch'g
45100 Amal. Ref.	46⅝	38½	38⅛	—4⅛

"Wiped again!" he muttered as he dropped the paper to the floor.

Half an hour later, when Alex and Max Gershon

came out of the adjoining room with the copartnership agreement duly executed, they found Uncle Mosha calmly smoking the last of his cigar while he pondered over the "News for Investors" column. The tabulated list of quotations was not unnoticed by Max as he felt for another cigar to present to the old man.

"Do you ever speculate in Wall Street, Mr. Kronberg?" he asked.

"Oncet upon a time I used to," Uncle Mosha replied, "but never no more, Maxie. It's a game which you couldn't beat — take it from me, Maxie — not if you was a hundred times so smart as Old Man Baum."

"Well, Abe," Morris Perlmutter remarked as they sat in their showroom ten days after the events above noted, "I did mix up in Alex Kronberg's family matters and, with all your croaking, what is the result? Alex has got a good partner; Uncle Mosha has got a good home, and ourselves we got a good order for three thousand dollars, which otherwise we wouldn't got at all."

"What are you talking nonsense, Mawruss?" Abe said. "Things wouldn't turned out the way they did if it wouldn't be I met Max Gershon in Hammersmith's. That's what started it, Mawruss."

"Nothing of the kind, Abe," Morris retorted. "What started it, Abe, was me when I went down

to Madison Street and give Uncle Mosha that cigar, Abe. I tell you, Abe, it's an old saying and a true one: Throw away a loaf of bread in the water, y'understand, and sooner or later, Abe, it would come home like chickens to roost."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RAINCOAT KING

"THE table is all right, Mawruss," Abe Potash remarked as he consulted the timecard of the Long Island Railroad one hot July afternoon. "The table is all right; I ain't kicking about the table, y'understand, but the class of people which they stay in the house, Mawruss, is pretty *schlecht.* My Rosie couldn't get along with 'em at all."

"You don't tell me!" Morris replied. "Riesenberger's is got a big reputation, Abe, and when me and Minnie stayed there two years ago there was an elegant class of people stopping in the house. Would you believe me, Abe, I tried to get up a game of auction pinocle there and I couldn't do it! Nobody would play less than a dollar a hundred. I'm surprised to hear the place is run down so."

"Oh, if the house's got a big reputation for auction pinocle, Mawruss, then that's something else again! They play just as high as former times. Sidney Koblin lost forty dollars last night. With my own eyes I seen it, Mawruss; and his father looks on and don't say nothing."

"What does Max Koblin care for forty dollars, Abe?" Morris said. "The feller's a millionaire. He's got ten pages of advertising in the *Cloak and Suit Monthly Gazette*. I bet yer he spends more as forty dollars for one page already. Wait; I'll show it to you."

Morris opened the green-covered periodical and displayed a full-page "ad."

MAX KOBLIN
KING OF RAINCOATS
"KOBLINETTE," THE RAINSHED FABRIC
WEST 20TH STREET
NEW YORK

"Sure, I know, Mawruss," Abe commented. "He was always a big faker, that feller. Twenty years since already I used to eat by Gifkin's on Canal Street, and one day Max Koblin comes in and says to me, 'Abe,' he says, 'I want you should drink a bottle tchampanyer wine on me.' In them days Max works for old man Zudosky selling boys' reefers. Raincoats was like oitermobiles; no one had discovered 'em yet. 'What's the matter, Max?' I says. 'Old man Zudosky given you a raise?' I says. 'Raise nothing,' Max says. 'I got a boy up to my house.' 'So,' I says, 'just be-

cause you got a boy, Max, I should got a headache and neglect my business?' I says. 'An idee!' I says. 'Take the dollar and a quarter, Max,' I says, 'and put it in the savings bank, and every time you give the boy a penny make him put it away with the other money,' I says; 'and the first thing you know, Max,' I says, 'when the boy gets to be twenty years old he's got anyhow a couple hundred dollars in the savings bank.'"

"And what did Max say?" Morris asked.

"He laughs at me, Mawruss," Abe replied. "He says to me, 'when that boy gets to be twenty years old he wouldn't need to got to have a couple hundred dollars in the savings bank. I could give him all the money he wants it.'"

"Well, Max was right, ain't it?" Morris rejoined. "He could give the boy all the money he wants."

"Money ain't everything what that boy wants, Mawruss," Abe said. "A good *potch* on the side of the head oncet in a while is what that boy wants. So fresh that young feller is, Mawruss, you wouldn't believe it at all. Actually he runs an oitermobile what Max bought it for him for fifteen hundred dollars, a birthday present, besides the other big car which Koblin got it. Max *oser* runs oitermobiles at Sidney's age. Piece goods on a pooshcart from old man Zudosky's to the sponger's was all the oitermobiling Max done it. To-day they are putting on style yet. Suckers!"

"Well, say, Abe," Morris protested, "what is it skin off your nose supposing Max does buy oitermobiles for the boy? This is a free country, Abe."

"Sure, I know, Mawruss," Abe declared, as he revealed the nub of the whole matter; "and supposing my Rosie don't play poker, which, *Gott sei dank*, she couldn't tell a king from an ace, what is that Mrs. Koblin's business? She ain't supposed to know that, Mawruss, and yet she didn't invite my Rosie to her poker party. Rosie wouldn't of gone anyhow, Mawruss; but that ain't the point. Ain't my Rosie just as good as Mrs. Klinger *oder* Mrs. Elenbogen? Particularly Mrs. Elenbogen, which, three years ago even, Kleiman & Elenbogen was still rated ten to fifteen thousand, third credit. Only in the last two years they are coming up so; and the way that Mrs. Elenbogen acts, you would think her husband got a bank in Frankfort-am-Main when Rothschild was a new beginner yet. Such fakers as them is too good for my Rosie, Mawruss. An idee!"

"What do you worry yourself about women's fighting, Abe?" Morris asked.

"Me worry myself, Mawruss!" Abe cried. "I much care for them people, Mawruss. I am married to my Rosie now going on twenty-six years, will be next May, and if I didn't know that she's got it on every one of them cows in looks, in refinement and

in every which way, Mawruss, then I could worry, Mawruss. As it is, Mawruss, for my part they could play poker till they are black in the face — what is it my business? I got enough to attend to here in the store, Mawruss, without I should bother myself."

"I bet yer!" Morris agreed fervently. "That reminds me, Abe, Shapolnik is leaving us on Saturday."

"Well, Mawruss, I couldn't exactly break my heart about that, y'understand?" Abe replied. "Skirt-cutters you could always get plenty of 'em. What's the matter he ain't satisfied?"

"Nothing's the matter," Morris said. "He is simply going into the pants business. His brother-in-law is got a small place downtown and he is going as partners together with him. They ought to make a success of it too, Abe, if nerve would got anything to do with it. The feller actually wants me I should give him an introduction to Feder of the Kosciusko Bank."

"Sure; why not?" Abe commented.

"Why not?" Morris repeated. "What would Feder think of us if we are bringing a yokel like Shapolnik into his office? The feller ain't been two years in the country yet."

"Don't knock a feller like Shapolnik just because he ain't putting on no front nor throwing no bluffs, Mawruss," Abe retorted. "It's the faker with the

four-carat diamond pin which is doing his creditors, Mawruss, but the yokel with the soup on his coat pays a hundred cents on the dollar every time."

Half an hour later Abe conducted his retiring skirt-cutter to the Fifth Avenue branch of the Kosciusko Bank, and as they approached the corner of Nineteenth Street on their return they encountered Max Koblin, the Raincoat King. He was about to enter the tonneau of an automobile, while Sidney Koblin, the Heir Apparent, sat at the tiller arrayed in a silk duster and goggles. Max grinned maliciously as he noted Abe's shabby, bearded companion.

"Always entertaining the out-of-town trade, Abe?" he said.

Abe relaxed his features in what he intended for a smile, but afterward he turned to Shapolnik with a scowl.

"Only one thing I got to tell you, Shapolnik," he declared. "Nowadays, if a feller wants to make a success he must got to wear good clothes and look like a *mensch*, y'understand? It never harms in business, Shapolnik, that a feller should throw sometimes, oncet in a while, a little bluff."

Between the ages of sixteen and twenty Sidney Koblin had so often tested the maxim, "Boys will be boys," that Max Koblin's patience at length became exhausted. "Do you mean to told me you ain't got one cent left from that forty I gave you on

Saturday?" Max asked on the Monday morning following Shapolnik's resignation.

"Aw, what's biting you?" Sidney cried. "You sat behind me last night and if it wouldn't been for you I wouldn't of played that last four-hundred hand at all. Cost forty-eight dollars, that advice of yours."

This was a facer, to be sure, and Max paused before formulating a rejoinder.

"In the first place, Sidney," he began, "you didn't got no right to lead no trump. I told you before lots of times, if you got the extra ten, get rid of your meld first. And in the second place, Sidney, I wouldn't stand for your extravagance no longer. It's time you turned around and attended to business."

"Aw, you never give me no show!" Sidney protested. "You keep me monkeying around while other young fellers is out on the road. Look at Mortie Savin and all them boys."

"Sure, I know," Max rejoined. "They got heads on 'em. You couldn't add up eight figures together, and at your age for a feller to write a hand like that, Sidney——"

"What are you kicking about?" Sidney exclaimed. "When you was my age you couldn't sign your name even."

"Well, that ain't here nor there, Sidney," Max replied as he pulled a bill from the roll which he

produced from his trousers pocket. "Here is ten dollars and that's got to last you till Saturday night. D'ye understand?"

Sidney grunted as he tucked the bill into his waistcoat. He had heard the same ultimatum once a week for the past two years, and he whistled cheerfully as he despatched one of the stock boys for a package of cigarettes. An hour later he lunched at Hammersmith's, while Abe Potash sat at an adjacent table. As he consumed a modest portion of *rostbraten*, Abe noted with a disapproving eye the cherry-stone clams, green-turtle soup and *filet Chateaubriand* which formed the menu of the Heir Apparent; and when the latter topped off his meal with half a pint of dry champagne and a *café parfait* Abe seized his hat and fairly ran from the restaurant.

"If nobody would tell that feller Koblin what a lowlife bum he got it for a son, Mawruss," he said as he entered the firm's private office ten minutes later, "I will. Actually with my own eyes I seen it — the feller eats for five dollars a lunch, and he ain't with a customer nor nothing."

"What is it your business what Sidney Koblin is eating, Abe?" Morris rejoined. "If you wouldn't notice every mouthful the feller puts in his face at all you would be back here a whole lot sooner. There's a feller waiting for you in the showroom over half an hour since."

"Who is he?" Abe asked.

"I think it's that Mr. — Who's this, from Seattle, which he was in here last fall and nearly bought from us them polo coats? I couldn't tell his face exactly, but you remember what a swell dresser that feller was."

Abe peered through the screen that divided the rooms.

"I think you're right, Mawruss," he said.

"I couldn't remember his name," Morris added, "and that's why I didn't talk much to him. All I says was you would be in soon; and I give him a cigar from the safe."

Abe nodded and walked hurriedly out of the office. As he approached his caller he extended his right hand.

"How do you do?" he exclaimed, as he shook his visitor warmly by the hand. "You're looking fine."

The visitor smiled in return.

"I thought you were going to tell me that," he replied.

"Yes, indeed! You're looking a whole lot better than the last time I seen you," Abe said. "When did you get in?"

"I am here now going on half an hour already."

"Well, why didn't you talk to my partner?" Abe asked. "He could fix you up just as well as me."

"I did talk to him," the newcomer replied, "but he is too stuck up to talk to me at all."

"Stuck up!" Abe exclaimed, with a note of real anguish in his tones. "Stuck up! Why, you don't know my partner at all, Mister — er — excuse me, do you got a card?"

The stranger drew a card from his waistcoat pocket and with a proud gesture handed it to Abe. It read as follows:

Z. KATZBERG I. SCHAPP

KATZBERG & SCHAPP
FINE PANTS

530 WEST WASHINGTON PLACE NEW YORK

"I am taking your advice, Mr. Potash," he said. "I am taking your advice all round. I cut 'em off."

"You cut what off?" Abe asked.

"The whiskers, Mr. Potash. Also I am making short the name. In Russland Shapolnik is all right, Mr. Potash; but if a feller wants to make a success in business he should be a little up to date, ain't it?"

The cordial smile faded from Abe's face as he recognized his visitor.

"There's such a thing as being too much up to date, Shapolnik," he said. "You ain't got no right to fool my partner like that. Me, you couldn't fool for a minute. Right away I says to myself, 'Here

is a feller which he wants to ask us something we should do him for a favour.' So, spit it out, Shapolnik. What is it you want from us?"

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Potash," Shapolnik began. "Me and my partner we are wanting to take on somebody for a drummer, y'understand. We must got it some one which he is already got a trade. *Aber* he couldn't ask for too much money at the start on account we are going slow. If you know some young feller which he wants the job me and my partner would be much obliged, Mr. Potash."

"What d'ye think we are running here anyway, Shapolnik," Abe retorted — "an employment agency?"

"I am just taking chances might you would know somebody, maybe," Shapolnik murmured as he rose to his feet. He seemed much relieved at Abe's refusal. "And I hope you don't think I am doing something out of the way. You know, Mr. Potash, me and my partner we think a whole lot of your judgment, and if you would give us an advice we are willing we should follow it."

"Well, I ain't mad at you, Shapolnik," Abe said more mildly; "but all the same, if you want to get a drummer you got a right to advertise for one."

"We would do so," Shapolnik replied, "and if you would be in our *Nachbarschaft* oncet in a while, Mr. Potash, me and my partner would consider it an honour if you are dropping in to see us. We only got

a small place, Mr. Potash." He paused and fingered the texture of his waistcoat. "But everything will be up to date, Mr. Potash," he concluded, "just like you advised us to."

Abe watched his late skirt-cutter disappear into the elevator, and then he returned to the office where Morris impatiently awaited him.

"*Nu*, Abe," Morris cried as he entered.

"Yes, Mawruss," Abe said with cutting emphasis: "good cigars don't care who smokes 'em. I suppose if Nathan, the shipping clerk, would come in here with a collar and tie on and a clean shave, you would want to blow him to a bottle of tchampanyer wine yet. Just because a feller shaves off his beard and buys himself a new suit of clothes you couldn't recognize him at all. That was Shapolnik which just went out of here."

"Shapolnik!" Morris exclaimed. "That dude was Shapolnik? Well, what d'ye think for a crook like that!"

"Crooked Shapolnik ain't exactly," Abe interrupted; "but it should be a lesson to you, Mawruss, that you wouldn't be so free with our cigars. All the feller wants from us is we should recommend him a drummer."

"The nerve the feller got it!" Morris cried. "He comes around here throwing bluffs he needs a drummer yet. A new beginner like him ain't going to hire no drummer, Abe. I bet yer he takes his pants

under his arms and sees them Fourteenth Street buyers on his way downtown in the morning. He ain't got no more use for a drummer than I got it for an airship."

"My *tzuris* if he has or he hasn't!" Abe exclaimed. "I anyhow told him he should advertise for one, as we are not running an employment agency here, Mawruss; and so, Mawruss, let's get busy on that order for Griesman. I want to get away from here sure at five o'clock to-day. What is the good I am staying down at Riesenberger's if I never get a show to take oncet in a while a sea bath, maybe?"

Nevertheless it was ten minutes past five before Abe boarded a crosstown car; and, although he made a wild sprint from the ferry landing on the Long Island side, he arrived at the trainshed just in time to see the rear platform of the five-forty-five for Arverne disappearing in a cloud of black smoke.

He returned to the waiting room, and as he was sadly inspecting the outer pages of the comic periodicals displayed in the news-stand a heavy hand clapped him on the shoulder.

"Hello, Abe!" cried a hearty voice, and Abe turned to view the perspiring features of Max Koblin, the Raincoat King. Abe returned the salutation without much enthusiasm.

"Why ain't you going down in the oitermobile, Max?" he asked. "Millionaires ain't got no excuse for missing trains like ordinary people."

Max laughed in an embarrassed fashion.

"Millionaires is got their troubles too, Abe," he said. "Even when they ain't millionaires."

"I should have your trouble!" Abe commented.

"I got enough, Abe, believe me," Max rejoined. "Everything I got to look after myself. My credit man leaves me next week; and I got other worries besides that one, too."

"Sure, I know," Abe said as they started for the smoker of the six-ten; "and the biggest one you got only yourself to blame for it."

"What d'ye mean, Abe?" Max asked.

"I mean this, Max," Abe declared. "I am knowing you now since twenty years already, and if I am butting in you could know it ain't because I am fresh, y'understand, but because I got your interests at heart. That boy of yours goes too far, Max."

Max drew a cigar from his waistcoat pocket and carefully bit off the end. "How so?" he inquired.

"Well, in a whole lot of ways, Max," Abe continued, after they were seated; "and mind you, I know it ain't none of my business, Max, but when I see that boy come into Hammersmith's to-day and eat for five dollars a lunch, with a bottle of tchampanyer wine yet, Max, I couldn't help myself. I got to say something."

Max scowled and spat out the end of his cigar.

"Of course, Max," Abe added, using his partner's

metaphor, "it ain't no skin off my nose, y'understand."

"Ain't it?" Max growled as he turned on Abe with a menacing glare. "Well, it's a wonder it ain't, the way you are sticking it into other people's business. If you think I care what you think about what my boy eats for his lunch you are making a big mistake. I could take care of my own boy, Potash, and I am just as much obliged if you would do the same."

Abe flushed a fiery red and rose to his feet.

"I guess I would go into the next car," he said.

"You could go a whole lot farther for all I care!" Max retorted, and immediately buried his head between the open pages of a conservative evening paper.

Abe had not offended in vain, however, for after dinner that night, when Sidney sought his father in the Koblins' suite at Riesenberger's cottage, the King was in an ugly mood.

"Say, Pop," Sidney began, "how about you for twenty till Saturday night?"

"What d'ye mean?" Max bellowed. "Ain't I given you ten dollars only this morning?"

Sidney laughed uncomfortably. "Ain't you the old tightwad!" he said.

Max's reply to this observation was quite unprecedented in all Sidney's experience. It took the form of an open-handed blow on the cheek, the first

ever administered by his indulgent parent since Sidney's infancy. Forthwith began a family row that brought the entire household — guests, servants and proprietress — on the run to the Koblin apartments. When Mrs. Koblin's frightened screams had ceased, and Max Koblin had calmed down sufficiently to offer an evasive explanation, the guests trooped back to the piazza, and three games of auction pinocle, which had started in the dining-room after the tables had been cleared, came to an abrupt close. Instead, the players foregathered with the other guests in the porch rockers.

There they discussed the incident until nearly midnight; and, as no one had been an eyewitness of the affray, there were as many versions of it as may be mathematically demonstrated where one blow is struck among three persons. Some had it that Sidney had attacked his father and others that Mrs. Koblin had assaulted Sidney, but a large feminine majority favoured a construction of the matter as one of wife-beating. Abe alone correctly surmised the turn that Sidney's affairs had taken and he sat on the piazza in conscience-stricken solitude long after all the other guests had retired.

He blamed himself for the entire affair and he smoked cigar after cigar before he sought his bed. As he walked up the broad staircase he met Max Koblin at the first landing.

"Max," he said, "where are you going this time of night?"

Max stopped short. His eyes blazed in a face so careworn and haggard that, to Abe, he seemed to have aged ten years since their meeting that afternoon.

"This is what comes of your butting in!" Max cried bitterly. "The boy went out right after we had the fuss and he ain't come back."

He paused to choke down a hysterical lump in his throat.

"And God knows what's become of him!" he sobbed as he continued down the stairs.

Abe tossed on his pillow all night; and when at breakfast he learned that Sidney Koblin had not returned, he swallowed with difficulty a cup of coffee and left a steak, two eggs and a plate of French-fried potatoes entirely untasted. Thus he was enabled to catch the seven-five instead of the seven-thirty train. When he found himself at the Thirty-fourth Street Ferry with almost half an hour to spare he determined to walk to the store.

He trudged across Thirty-fourth Street with his hands in his pockets and his head bent toward the pavement, a prey to the most bitter reflections; and as he turned the corner of Fifth Avenue he failed to notice, walking in the opposite direction, a tall youth, well dressed save for soiled linen. The latter's eyes

showed traces of unmistakable tears; and as they, too, were bent upon the pavement there ensued a violent collision, which almost threw Abe off his feet.

"Why don't you look where you're going?" he began, and then he recognized the object of his wrath. "Sidney!" he yelled, clutching young Koblin's shoulder. "Where are you going?"

"Let me alone," Sidney cried as he sought to free himself.

"*Aber*, Sidney," Abe pleaded, "you mustn't act so strange with me. Did you got any breakfast yet?"

Sidney shook his head sullenly.

"Me neither," Abe cried. "Come on over to the Waldorf."

Five minutes later they sat at a table in the palm room, while Abe ordered two whole portions of grapefruit, a double portion of tenderloin steak, soufflé potatoes, coffee, waffles and honey.

"Now, listen to me, Sidney," he began. "You shouldn't got mad at your father just because he licks you oncet, y'understand. My poor father, *selig*, he knocks the face off of me regular twicet a week, and I ain't none the worser for it."

Sidney hung his head and made no reply.

"Furthermore, Sidney," Abe went on, "if you are broke why don't you say so?"

He pulled a roll of bills out of his pocket and handed Sidney twenty dollars.

"Just a loan for a few days, y'understand," he said

as the waiter brought in a loaded tray, "or a year — what's the difference — ain't it? Now, let's get busy."

Together they polished off the entire trayful of food, and when Abe leaned back the waiter presented a check for ten dollars and eighty cents.

"Cheap at the price," Abe remarked as he added a generous tip to the amount of the bill. "And now, Sidney, I suppose you're going back to the store?"

"No, I ain't," Sidney said. "I ain't doing no good down there; so what's the use? The old man won't let me do nothing down there and they all think I'm a joke."

"Well, you see, Sidney," Abe commented, "that's the way it goes. It's an old saying, but a true one: 'There's no profit for a feller in his own country.'"

"And what's more," Sidney continued, "they ain't given me a chance neither. What I want to do is to sell goods on the road."

"Sure, I know," Abe interrupted. "Every young feller wants to go on the road. All they can see in it is riding in parlour cars and playing auction pinocle in four-dollar-a-day hotels. Believe me, Sidney, selling goods on the road, when you been at it so long as I am, is a dawg's life; and as for auction pinocle that's poison for a salesman."

"Auction pinocle is nothing to me," Sidney declared. "I swore off."

"Another thing is lunches, Sidney," Abe went on. "Ain't it a funny thing what a lot of satisfaction

it is when you are eating zwieback and a cup of coffee for lunch? In the first place, all it is costing you is ten cents and you feel like a prince. Many a big bill of goods I sold on zwieback and coffee, Sidney — crackers and milk, too. And now, Sidney, the best thing you could do is to go back and tell the old man you are through with auction pinocle and high-price lunches, and you want him he should give you a show you should sell goods."

Again Sidney shook his head.

"It ain't no use, Mr. Potash," Sidney declared. "Pop ain't got no confidence in me. If I was a greenhorn fresh from the old country he might let me start in and do something, but ——"

At the word greenhorn Abe Potash leaned forward and struck the table with his open hand.

"By jiminy, Sidney!" he cried, "I know the very job for you. Only one thing I must got to say to you, Sidney: you would got to commence small; so if what you are saying about auction pinocle and other monkey business goes, Sidney, all right. Otherwise the thing is off."

"Sure, it goes, Mr. Potash," Sidney cried.

Abe looked the Heir Apparent squarely in the eye for two minutes and then he struck the table again.

"I believe you, Sidney," he said, "and we will right away take the car down to West Washington Place."

Katzberg & Schapp occupied the top floor of an old private house; but what their place of business lacked in size it made up in activity. Pressing irons were sizzling and banging and sewing machines were burring loudly as Abe and Sidney climbed the stairs. When they entered, Shapolnik, the butterfly of fashion, had once more assumed the chrysalis of his working clothes.

"How do you do, Mister Potash?" he cried, all in one breath. "Excuse me; I am looking like a slob. We are busy like dawgs here. Katzberg!" he yelled; "*Kimmen Sie hieran.*"

In response, a stout figure, clad only in an undershirt, trousers and a pair of carpet slippers, laid down a pressing iron and shuffled toward the visitors.

"My partner, Mister Katzberg," Shapolnik announced. "He also looks a slob, Mr. Potash; but when we are getting partitions in, and our office fixed up, no one would see him at all. He is the inside man; and me, I am in the office and showroom. We're going to have a showroom so soon as we are settled — a safe too. A telephone we already got it. This is Mr. Potash, Katzberg, and the other gentleman I don't know at all."

"Mr. Koblin," Abe explained; "he is coming to work by you as a salesman."

"A salesman!" Katzberg exclaimed. "Why, we don't want no ——"

Shapolnik turned on him with a glare.

"Katzberg," he said, "them samples you are working on we got to show the Magnet Store this afternoon yet."

Katzberg shrugged his shoulders and returned to his pressing, while Shapolnik drew forward two rickety chairs and a packing-box.

"Have a seat, Mr. Potash; and Mr. Cohen, too," he said.

"Koblin," Abe corrected.

"Koblin," Shapolnik repeated. "Excuse me."

He went to a closet in the corner, and unlocking it he exposed the fashionable suit that he had worn at Potash & Perlmutter's the previous afternoon. From the right-hand waistcoat pocket he took a red-banded invincible and handed it to Abe.

"Have a smoke, Mr. Potash?" he said. Abe examined the cigar closely and tucked it carefully away. Then he produced three panatelas, handed one each to Sidney and Shapolnik and lit the other himself.

"About this here salesman, Mr. Potash," Shapolnik commented. "I think I changed my mind."

Abe blew a great cloud of smoke before replying and then he placed an emphatic forefinger upon Shapolnik's knee.

"A new beginner when he throws bluffs, Shapolnik," he said, "must got to make good. You told me yesterday you wanted a salesman and I am bringing him to you."

Shapolnik blushed.

"Sure, I know I told it you, Mr. Potash," he said, "but my partner thinks otherwise."

Abe nodded.

"The only use some people got for a partner, Shapolnik," he commented, "is they could always blame him for everything they do; but even if you did come in my place just to show me what an elegant suit of clothes and a fine clean shave you got it, Shapolnik, I am bringing you a salesman anyhow."

Katzberg at this juncture again laid down his pressing iron and came forward.

"Say, lookyhere, what is the use talking?" he cried. "We don't need a salesman; and that's all there is to it."

"'S enough, Katzberg," Abe shouted. "You got a whole lot too much to say for yourself for a new beginner. I ain't saying you need a salesman, Katzberg; I am only saying that you are going to hire one, Katzberg. And after you hire one you will quick need him."

Abe placed his hand on Sidney's shoulder.

"Here is a young feller which he ain't going to gamble *oder* fool away his time. He is going to sell goods," he declared. "He works for years by the biggest raincoat house in the country, and he's got an acquaintance among the retail clothing trade which it is easy worth to you twenty-five dollars a week and the regular commissions."

"But we couldn't afford to pay no salesman twenty-five dollars a week," Shapolnik exclaimed.

"Try me just one week," Sidney said, "and I'll bring in enough cash to pay my salary."

"I forgot to say," Abe interrupted, "that he's also got a lot of confidence in himself."

"Maybe I have," Sidney retorted: "but I'm going to make good."

"Certainly you are," Abe added, rising from his chair; "and now, Katzberg, the whole thing is settled."

Katzberg shrugged and extended one palm outward in a gesture of despair.

"Seemingly we are not our own bosses here," he said.

"Seemingly not," Abe rejoined; "but, just the same, if you will take on this young feller for a salesman I would give you a guaran*tirt* that I will make good all you would lose on him for the first three months. Is my word good enough?"

"Sure, it is!" Shapolnik cried. "When would you come to work by us, Mr. Koblin?"

"This morning," Abe answered for Sidney — "right now; and one thing I must got to say to you, Sidney, before I go: Stand in your own shoes and don't try to excuse yourself on account you got a rich father. Also, if the old man makes you an offer you should come back to him, turn it down.

Take it from me, Sidney, you got a big future here."

With a parting handshake all around Abe started back to his place of business. Five minutes later he boarded a Broadway car, and when he alighted at Nineteenth Street he picked his way through a jam of vehicles, which completely blocked that narrow thoroughfare. As he was about to set foot on the sidewalk he caught sight of the gray, drawn countenance of the Raincoat King, who sat beside his chauffeur on the front seat of a touring car.

"Say, Max," Abe cried, "I want to speak to you a few words something."

Max Koblin turned his head and recognized Abe with a start.

"What d'ye want from me?" he said huskily.

"I want to tell you the boy is all right," Abe replied.

The colour surged to Max's face and he leaped wildly from the automobile.

"What d'ye mean, all right?" he gasped.

"I mean all right in every way, Max," Abe answered; "and if you would step into Hammersmith's for a minute I'll tell you all about it."

"Where is he?" Max cried.

Abe led the way to a table.

"He's where he should have been *schon* long since already," he said as they sat down. "He's got a job and he's going to make good on it."

"What are you talking nonsense?" Max exploded. "Where is my Sidney? His mother is pretty near crazy."

"She shouldn't worry," Abe replied calmly. "The boy is coming home to-night; and if I would be you, Max, I would see to it he pays anyhow eight dollars a week board."

Once more Max grew white — with anger this time.

"Jokes you are making with me!" he bellowed. "Tell me where my boy is quick or I'll ——"

"*Koosh*, Max!" Abe interrupted. "You are making a fool of yourself. I ain't hiding your boy. Just listen a few minutes and I'll tell you all about it."

Forthwith he unfolded to Max a vivid narrative of that morning's adventures; when he concluded Max had grown somewhat calmer.

"But, Potash," he protested, "I don't want the boy he should work by somebody else. Let him come and sell goods by me."

"He couldn't do it and you couldn't neither, Max," Abe said. "If he goes back to you, Max, you couldn't change over the way you've been treating that boy ever since he was born, and he sure would go back to the way he has been acting. Let the boy stay where he is, Max."

"Say, lookyhere, Potash," Max burst out, "what are you butting into my affairs for? Ain't I competent to manage my own son?"

Abe deemed it the part of friendship to remain silent, but Max misconstrued his reticence.

"O-o-h!" he exclaimed. "I see the whole business now. You got an interest in this here pants factory and so you practically kidnap my son. Do you know what I think? I think you are trying to jolly me into letting him stay there because you expect maybe I would invest some money in the business."

For two minutes Abe gulped convulsively and blinked at the Raincoat King in stunned amazement. Then he rose slowly to his feet.

"All right, Koblin," he said. "I heard enough from you. I wash myself of the entire matter. For my part you and your son could go to the devil; and take it from me, it won't be your fault if he don't."

When Abe entered the firm's showroom that morning it was nearly half-past eleven and Morris Perlmutter sat behind the pages of the *Daily Cloak and Suit Record* in a sulky perusal of the Arrival of Buyers column. Before he looked up he permitted Abe to discard his coat for an office jacket.

"You was taking a sea bath, Abe?" he said at length. "Ain't it? I suppose we would pretty soon got to close up the store so's you could take all the sea baths you want. What?"

Abe refrained from uttering a suitable rejoinder and made straight for the office.

"Mawruss!" he yelled; "ain't the safe open yet?"

"Never mind is the safe open *oder* not, Abe," Morris replied. "So long as you are attending to business the way you are, Abe, it ain't necessary the safe should be opened."

Abe grunted and squatted down in front of the combination. At length the big doors swung open and he drew the box of cigars out of the middle compartment.

Morris looked on with ill-concealed curiosity while Abe took a banded Invincible from his waistcoat pocket and restored it to the box whence it originally came.

"What's all that for?" Morris asked.

"That's a souvenir from a pleasant morning," Abe replied as he thrust the box of cigars back into the safe and slammed the doors. He was about to return to the showroom, when the telephone bell rang and Morris took the receiver from the hook.

"Hello!" he said. "Yes, this is Potash & Perlmutter. He's right here. Abe, Max Koblin wants to talk to you."

"He does, hey?" Abe replied. "Well, I don't want to talk to him."

"You should tell him that yourself," Morris said as he walked away from the telephone. "I ain't got nothing to do with your quarrels."

Abe watched Morris disappear into the showroom and then he ran to the telephone and slammed the

receiver on to the hook with force sufficient almost to wreck the instrument. At intervals of a few seconds the telephone rang for more than half an hour. Fifteen minutes after it had ceased the elevator door opened and Max Koblin entered.

"Cut-throat!" Koblin exclaimed. "I rung up my son and he wouldn't come back. You are turning him against me — you and them two other crooks. You think you would get my money out of me. Very well. I'll show you. I ain't through with you yet. I'll put you fellers where you belong."

"Don't make me no threats, Koblin," Abe said calmly, "because, in the first place, you couldn't scare me any, and, in the second place, if you think I am trying to keep your boy away from you, you are mistaken — that's all. I already wasted a whole morning on him and, just to show you I ain't such a crook as you think I am, I would go right down there now; and if I got to do it I would drag that young loafer out of there by the hair of his head."

Twenty minutes later Abe burst into Katzberg & Schapp's business premises and asked in loud tones for Sidney Koblin. Before the astonished Shapolnik could reply, Max Koblin, who had followed Abe on the next car, arrived all breathless and panted a similar demand.

"He ain't in now," Shapolnik replied; "he is just going to his lunch."

"What d'ye mean by talking to me on the 'phone

the way you did this morning?" Max shouted. "You ain't got no business to keep my boy from me."

"I ain't keeping your boy from you," Shapolnik answered; "and I would speak to you whichever what way I would want to. Who are you anyway?"

"*Koosh!* Shapolnik," Abe interrupted. "You are talking too fresh. Mr. Koblin is right. You should fire that young feller right away, because I am telling you right here and now I wouldn't guarantee nothing for him after this."

"What do I care what you would guarantee or what you wouldn't guarantee?" Shapolnik replied. "The young feller already sold for us this morning for five hundred dollars a bill of goods, and he could stay with us *oder* not, just as he wants. Furthermore, Mr. Potash, I don't give a snap of my fingers for your *guarantirt;* this is my shop and if you don't want to stay here you don't got to."

He seized a pressing-iron in token that the interview was ended and Abe and Max started for the stairs without another word. As they reached the sidewalk Abe paused. Across the street a dairy lunchroom displayed its white-enamel sign and through the plate-glass window he thought he discerned a familiar figure. He ran to the opposite sidewalk and entered the restaurant, closely followed by Max, just as Sidney Koblin was eating the last crumbs of a portion of zwieback and coffee.

"Hello, Sidney!" Abe said. "What's the matter with you? Why don't you go back to your father?"

Sidney rose to his feet and looked first at Abe and then at the Raincoat King.

"What for?" he asked nonchalantly.

"Because he asks you to," Abe replied, "and because I didn't got no right to butt in the way I did, Sidney. After all, your father is your father."

"What's biting you now?" Sidney exclaimed. "Ain't you told me this morning I should do what I did?"

Abe nodded sadly.

"And didn't you say me and the old man couldn't give each other a square deal even if we wanted to?"

Abe nodded again.

"Then I'm going to stick to my job," Sidney declared as he walked toward the cashier's desk.

Abe and Max trailed after him and when they reached the sidewalk Max seized his son by the arm.

"Sidney, *leben*," he said; "listen to me. Come and eat anyhow a decent lunch and we'll talk this thing over."

"What for?" Sidney said. "I've had as much as I want to eat, and besides I've got to see a fellow up at the Prince Clarence Hotel. I'll be at Riesenberger's to dinner to-night about the usual time."

"Oh, you will, will you?" Max cried. "Well, all I got to say is you've got to pay for it yourself."

Sidney broke into a laugh.

"That worries me a whole lot!" he said. "I've made enough out of my commissions to-day already to pay a whole week's board down there."

He turned and started across the street, but as he reached the curb he paused.

"Tell mommer she shouldn't worry herself," he said. "I'm all right."

Max looked at Abe with a sickly grin.

"I think he is too, Abe," he murmured. "Would you come over to Broadway and take maybe a little lunch with me?"

"Zwieback and coffee is good enough for me," Abe replied.

Max linked his arm in Abe's.

"You shouldn't be mad at me, Abe," he said sadly. "I am all turned upside down about that boy; and if zwieback and coffee is good enough for you and him, Abe, I guess it must be too good for me. But, just the same, I am going to eat with you, Abe, and we'll let bygones be bygones."

It was some weeks before Abe could bring himself to recount to Morris the full details of Sidney Koblin's regeneration, but Morris had learned the facts long before there appeared in the advertising

section of the *Clothing and Haberdashery Magazine* the following full-page advertisement:

KATZBERG, SCHAPP & KOBLIN
Announce the
OPENING OF THEIR NEW OFFICE AND SHOWROOM
In the Chicksaw Building, West 4th Street,
New York
MAKERS OF TROUSERS FOR FINICKY FOLKS

A HEADLINER
THE RAINSHED PANTS
Manufactured from the Famous Rainproof Fabric
"KOBLINETTE"
KEEPS THE LEGS WARM AND DRY
Spring Line Now Ready

It caught Morris's eye one morning in January and he read it over — not without envy.

"Some people's got all the luck, Abe," he said bitterly.

"I bet yer!" Abe replied, without looking up from his order book, which was overflowing with requisitions for spring garments. "I bet yer, Mawruss! You take my Rosie for instance: at her age you got no idee what a sport she is. Yesterday afternoon she went to a bridge-whist party by Mrs. Koblin's and she won a sterling solid-silver fern dish. And mind you, Mawruss, she only just found out how to play the game."

"Who learned her?" Morris asked.

"Mrs. Klinger and Mrs. Elenbogen," Abe replied. "That's two fine women, Mawruss — particularly Mrs. Elenbogen."

CHAPTER FIVE

A RETURN TO ARCADY

"YES, Abe," Morris Perlmutter said with bitter emphasis; "Max Kirschner steals away trade from under our noses while you fool away your time selling goods to a feller like Sam Green."

"What d'ye mean, fool away my time?" Abe cried indignantly. "Sam Green is an old customer from ours; and if Henry Feigenbaum gives for a couple of hundred dollars an order to Max Kirschner he only does it because he's got pity on the old man. And, anyhow, Mawruss, even if Sam Green is a little slow, y'understand, sooner or later we get our money — ain't it?"

"Sure, I know, Abe; and if them sooner-or-later fellers would pay you oncet in a while sooner, Abe, it would be all right, y'understand. But they don't, Abe; they always pay you later."

"Well, Sam has got some pretty stiff competition up there, Mawruss," Abe said. "In the first place, Cyprus is too near Sarahcuse, y'understand; and if one of them yokels wants to buy for thirty dollars

a garment for his wife, if he is up-to-date, he goes to Sarahcuse; and if he is a back number he goes to Sam's competitors! — what's the name, now? — Van Buskirk & Patterson. Yes, Mawruss, back numbers always buys from back numbers."

"Why don't we sell that Van Buster concern our line, Abe?"

"A fine chance I got it with them people, Mawruss!" Abe exclaimed. "They buy their whole stock from a jobber in Buffalo and they got an idee that Russian blouses is the latest up-to-the-minute effect in garments. And you couldn't blame 'em, Mawruss; most of the women up in Cyprus thinks that way too."

"That ain't here nor there, Abe," Morris interrupted. "Sam Green is one of them fellers which he is slow pay if he would be worth a million even. He's got the habit Abe. Look what he writes us now."

He handed Abe a letter which read as follows:

SAMUEL GREEN
DRYGOODS AND NOTIONS
THE K. & M. SYLPHSHAPE CORSET

CYPRUS, NEW YORK, April 1, 1910

GENTS: Your favour of the thirtieth inst. rec'd and contents noted; and in reply would say you should be so kind and wait a couple days, and I will send you a check sure — on an account I got sickness in the family and oblige

Yours truly, S. GREEN.

"Well, Mawruss," Abe commented, mindful of a recent obstinate lumbago, "might the feller did got sickness in his family maybe."

"*Schmooes*, Abe!" Morris cried impatiently. "Every season that feller's got another excuse. Last fall his wife goes to work and has an operation. A year ago he is got his uncle in the hospital. The winter before that he is got funeral expenses on account his mother died on him; and so it goes, Abe. That feller would a damsite sooner kill off his whole family, y'understand, than pay a bill to the day it is due."

"All right," Abe said; "then we wouldn't sell him no more — that's all."

Morris shrugged.

"That's all!" he repeated. "A concern don't pay strictly to the day; so we couldn't sell 'em no more, and that's all, *sagt er!* For a feller which he's losing customers right and left to a back number like Max Kirschner, Abe, you are talking pretty independent."

"Say, lookyhere, Mawruss," Abe exploded; "I just told it you Max Kirschner only gets that order from Henry Feigenbaum because he takes pity on him."

"What d'ye mean, pity?" Morris retorted. "I seen Max Kirschner in the subway this morning and he looks like he needs pity, Abe. He's got diamonds stuck on him like a pawnbroker's window."

"That's all right, Mawruss," Abe continued. "Some drummers is got diamonds and some is got bank accounts, but there's mighty few got both, Mawruss; and Max Kirschner ain't one of 'em. One thing you got to remember, Mawruss — Max is an old man."

"What are you talking nonsense! An old man!" Morris exclaimed. "Max is just turned sixty."

"Sure, I know," Abe commented, "and for a drummer, that's awful old, Mawruss. A feller which he spends six months out of the year in trains and hotels, Mawruss, is got to be mighty particular about what he eats. I stopped in one hotel together with Max *schon* many times already, and at dinner I am always eating steaks and oncet in a while eggs maybe; but Max goes for them French names every time. Many a night I watched Max in a hotel lobby and you could see by his face that his stomach is boiling."

"Never mind, Abe; I could stand a little indigestion, too, Abe, if I would be getting the orders Max is getting it."

"That's a thing of the past, Mawruss," Abe replied. "Business falls off something terrible with him, Mawruss; and the first thing you know, Mawruss, Klinger & Klein gets rid of him and them diamonds would got to come in handy before he finds another job."

"*Yow!* Klinger & Klein would get rid of him!"

Morris cried skeptically. "Max Kirschner ain't no ordinary drummer, Abe. There's a feller which he was born and raised on this side. He's a gentleman, Abe, and them boys respects him. Besides, Abe, he practically started them two greenhorns in business. Twenty years ago, when them boys was new beginners, Kirschner brings 'em a good trade, y'understand; and not only that, Abe, if it wouldn't be for him them fellers wouldn't never lasted six months. The first season they turned out a lot of stickers, and when they got short Max goes himself to old man Baum and gets him to lend them boys a thousand dollars. People don't forget such things in a hurry, Abe."

"Don't they, Mawruss?" Abe rejoined. "Well, maybe they do and maybe they don't, Mawruss; but twenty years is a long time to remember things, Mawruss, and when a feller draws big wages like Max Kirschner he's got to turn in the orders, Mawruss — otherwise past favours is nix."

Morris nodded.

"That's no lie neither, Abe," he said, rising to his feet; "and we should right away send Sam Green a letter either he should mail us a check or we would put his account into a collection agency. The feller goes too far, Abe."

It was precisely a week later that Max Kirschner's relations with the firm of Klinger & Klein finally reached their climax.

"Yes, Mawruss," Abe said as he entered the showroom after a brief visit to the barber-shop that morning — "what did I told you?"

"You didn't told me nothing, Abe," Morris retorted; "and, besides, it was my idee that we wrote him a rotten letter, otherwise we would wait for another week or ten days for our check. As it is, Abe, he deducts four dollars on us for a damage on account of bum packing. He is not only a crook, Abe, but a liar also."

"Four dollars wouldn't break us, Mawruss," Abe rejoined, "and we could easy make it up on the next bill he buys from us. But I wasn't talking about Sam Green at all. I mean Max Kirschner."

"I much bother my head about Kirschner!" Morris said. "Let Klinger & Klein worry about him."

Abe grunted as he removed his hat and coat.

"You'd wait an awful long time for Klinger & Klein to worry about him, Mawruss," he said. "Because them fellers got such hearts which *Gott soll hüten* their wives would die together with their children in one day yet — I am only saying, y'understand — them two suckers wouldn't worry neither. Saturday night they fired Max Kirschner like a dawg, Mawruss. And why? Because a week ago Max eats some *stuss* in Bridgetown, y'understand, which he is sick in bed for three days. And while he is

laid up yet Sammet Brothers cops out a thousand-dollar order on him."

"*Ai gewoldt!*" Morris cried, with ready sympathy. "You don't tell me?"

"And now that poor feller walks the streets looking for a job; and a fine show he's got it, an old man like him."

"Don't say that again, Abe," Morris said. "You Jonah the feller that way. Somebody hears you saying Max is an old man and the first thing you know, Abe, they believe he is old. I told you before Max is only sixty; and when my *grossvater selig* was sixty he gets married for the third time yet."

"Sure I know, Mawruss," Abe retorted. "Some fellers gets married for a wife and some for a nurse, Mawruss. Any cripple could get married, y'understand; but a feller must got to have his health to sell goods."

He seized the current issue of the *Daily Cloak and Suit Record*, and as he sat down to examine it he heaved a sigh which merged into an agonized groan.

"Oo-ee!" he exclaimed; "that lumbago still gets me in the back."

"You see, Abe," Morris commented maliciously, "you ain't so young yourself. From forty-eight to sixty ain't a thousand years neither, Abe."

Abe scowled and then his face lightened up in the conception of a happy idea.

"I give you right about that, Mawruss." he said:

"but with me it's different, Mawruss. If I get so I couldn't go out on the road, y'understand, we could always hire some one to go for us."

"Could we?" Morris grumbled.

"Sure," Abe went on; "and even to-day yet, while I am making Denver and the coast towns, it wouldn't harm us we should get a feller which is acquainted with the trade up the state and in Pennsylvania and Ohio."

"Wouldn't it?" Morris croaked.

"We are losing every day business, Mawruss, because I got such a big territory to cover," Abe said. "A feller in a small town wants his fall goods early just so much as one of them big concerns in Denver *oder* Seattle; and if I don't show up in time they place their orders with some one else. Whereas, Mawruss, if we would wait a couple of weeks, we would say for instance, until he finds out that every one ain't paying fancy salaries like Klinger & Klein, y'understand, for a couple thousand dollars a year, Mawruss, we could get Max Kirschner and ——"

"Max Kirschner?" Morris yelled. "What d'ye mean, Max Kirschner?"

"Yes, Mawruss," Abe said, "we could get Max Kirschner; and, even if he would be a little *kranklich* oncet in a while, sometimes maybe he would be worth to us two thousand a year anyhow."

"Two thousand a year!" Morris bellowed. "What the devil you are talking nonsense, Abe?

We should give two thousand a year to a cripple like Kirschner! What do you think you are running here anyhow — a cloak-and-suit business or a home for the aged? If you want to give to charity do it with your money, not mine."

For the remainder of the forenoon Morris Perlmutter moved about the showroom with his face distorted in so gloomy a scowl that to Abe it seemed as though a fog enveloped his partner, through which there darted, like flashes of heat lightning, exclamations of "*Schnorrer!* Cripple! With my money yet!" and "Crust that feller got it!" At length he put on his hat and went out to lunch, while Abe gazed after him in mute disgust.

"When some people talks charity," he grumbled. "you got to reckon a hundred per cent. discount for cash."

"You see, Abe," Morris cried as he came in from lunch, "how easy it is to misjudge people. I just seen Sol Klinger over to Hammersmith's and he tells me that in six weeks yet Max Kirschner falls down on three orders. Four thousand dollars that sucker, Leon Sammet, cops out on 'em; and Sol couldn't help himself, Abe. Either they got to fire Max *oder* they got to go out of business."

Abe nodded slowly. His face possessed an unusual pallor and he clenched an unlighted cigar between his teeth.

"What is it?" Morris asked. "Don't you feel good?"

"I am feeling fine, Mawruss," he replied huskily. "I could blow myself to a bottle tchampanyer wine yet, I feel so good. I am enjoying myself, Mawruss, on account Moe Griesman from Sarahcuse was just in here, which he tells me his nephew, Mozart Rabiner, goes to work for Klinger & Klein as a drummer and we should be so good and cancel the order which he gives us yesterday, as blood is redder as water; and what the devil could we do about it anyway?"

Morris's jaw dropped and he sat down heavily in the nearest chair.

"One thing I'm glad, Mawruss," Abe said as he put on his hat: "I'm glad, if we got to lose Moe Griesman's trade, Mawruss, that he is going to give it to a feller like Sol Klinger, which he is such a good friend to you, Mawruss, and got such a big heart."

He jammed his hat on his ears and started out.

"Where are you going, Abe?" Morris asked.

"I'm going over to Hammersmith's, Mawruss," he replied, "to get a bite to eat; and I hope to see Sol Klinger there, Mawruss, as I would like to congratulate him, Mawruss, with a pressing-iron."

Morris's face settled once more into a deep frown as the elevator door closed behind his partner.

"Always with his mouth he is making somebody a blue eye," he muttered as he turned to sorting

over the sample line against Abe's impending trip to the small towns up the state. He had picked out four cheap, showy garments when the elevator door clanged again and a visitor entered, bearing a brown-paper parcel.

"Well, Mawruss," he said, "what's the good word?"

The newcomer's cheery greeting was strangely at variance with his manner, which was as diffident as that of a village dog on the Fourth of July. As he advanced toward the showroom he exhaled the odour of mothballs, characteristic of an old stock of cloaks and suits, so that before he looked up Morris was able to identify his visitor.

"Hello, Sam!" he said. "When did you get in?"

"Twelve o'clock," Sam replied. "I would of got in sooner, but a crook of a scalper in Sarahcuse sells me a ticket which it is punched out as far as Canandaigua; and if it wouldn't be I paid four dollars extra I come pretty near getting kicked off the train."

"You ain't nothing out, Sam," Morris said, "because that's just the amount you are doing me for on our last bill."

"Doing you for!" Sam cried. "What d'ye mean, doing you for? One garment was damaged in the packing which I deducted the four dollars; and if you wouldn't believe me here it is now."

He unwrapped the brown-paper parcel and disclosed a crumpled article of women's apparel, which Morris shook out and examined critically.

"In the first place, Sam," he commented, "the garment has been worn."

"What are you talking nonsense — worn?" Sam protested. "Once only my Leah puts it on to see the damage. There it is."

Sam pointed with his forefinger and Morris looked at the spot indicated.

"Well, how could that be damaged in packing, Sam?" Morris asked indignantly. "That's a stain from *lockshen* soup."

"My wife must got to eat like any other woman!" Sam exclaimed indignantly; "and besides, Mawruss, the stain ain't all soup, y'understand — some of it gets wet in the packing-case."

"Well, I wouldn't bother my head about it no more," Morris retorted. "I deposited your check just now and we are lucky, if you would deduct four dollars, that we got our money at all."

"Maybe you are and maybe you ain't, Mawruss," Sam commented. "That's what I come down to see you about."

"What d'ye mean?" Morris cried.

"I mean," Sam said in husky tones, "I don't know whether the check is good at all. When I mailed it you I got a little balance at my bank, but yesterday afternoon the president sends for me and shuts down

on my accommodation; and maybe — I don't know whether he did *oder* not, y'understand — he takes my balance on account."

Morris laid down the garment and fixed his visitor with an angry glare.

"So!" he exploded; "you are going to fail on us?"

Sam disclaimed it indignantly.

"What d'ye think I am?" he demanded — "a crook? And besides, I ain't got nothing to fail with."

Morris drew forward a chair. Sam sat down; and leaning back he nursed his cheek with his hand in an attitude of utter dejection.

"Well, what are you going to do?" Morris asked.

"That's what I come down here to find out," Sam replied.

Then ensued a silence of several minutes during which Morris gazed attentively at his customer.

"The fact is, Sam," he said at last, "you ain't got no head."

Sam nodded sadly.

"You're a fool, Sam," Morris went on in kindly accents; "and no matter how hard a fool would work he is a poor man all his life."

Sam deemed it hardly worth while to acquiesce in this statement, but he indorsed it unconsciously with a large tear, which stole out of the corner of his eye and worked a clean groove down one travel-stained cheek.

"Have a smoke, Sam," Morris added hastily as he

thrust a cigar towardhis late customer. "Did you got your lunch yet? No? Come on out with me now and we would have a little bite to eat."

He jumped to his feet and seized his hat.

"Nathan," he bawled to the shipping clerk, "tell Mr. Potash I am going out with a customer and I'll be back when I am here."

Max Kirschner had reached the age of sixty without making a single enemy save his stomach, which at length ungratefully rejected all the rich favours that Max had bestowed on it so long and so generously. Indeed, he was reduced to a diet of crackers and milk when Abe encountered him in Hammersmith's restaurant that September morning.

"Hello, Max!" Abe cried. "When did you get back? I thought you was in one of them — now — sanatoriums."

"A sanatorium is no place for a drummer to find a job, Abe," Max replied.

"A good salesman like you could find a job anywhere without much trouble, Max," Abe said cheerfully.

"That's what everybody says, Abe; meantime I'm loafing."

"It wouldn't be for long, Max," Abe rejoined as he cast a hungry eye over Hammersmith's bill of fare. "How's that fillet de who's this, with asparagrass tips and mushrooms?"

For a brief moment Max's eye gleamed and then grew dull again.

"It's fine to put the stomach out of business, Abe," Max said. "Take the tip from one who has lost sixty pounds, ten customers, and a good job all in six weeks — and order poached eggs on toast."

Abe compromised on boiled beef with horseradish sauce; and when he was well into the noisy consumption of that simple dish he broached the subject of Max's future plans.

"When d'ye think you'll go to work again, Max?" he asked.

Max shrugged expressively.

"I'm not a prophet, Abe; I'm a salesman," he said.

"Well, there ain't no particular hurry, Max. It ain't the same like you would got a family to look out for."

"I've been a drummer all my life, Abe," Max declared, "and a drummer has no right to be married. When I was a kid I had a chance to go into the store of a couple of yokels upstate in the town where I was born and raised; and I guess if I'd done so I'd been married and had a whole family of children by now."

"Maybe you're just as well off, Max," Abe said consolingly. "Children is a gamble anyhow, Max. The boys is assets and the girls is liabilities; and if you got a large family of girls you're practically bankrupt, no matter how good business would be."

"Don't you believe it, Abe," Max said. "Those two yokels both had big families and they didn't do such a big business either. But they managed to make a good living, and last week I hear they sold out to some city dry goods man for forty thousand dollars."

Abe paused with a loaded knife in midair.

"Forty thousand dollars between two ain't much, Max," he said.

"It's more than I've got, anyhow," Max rejoined as he rose to his feet.

"You got lots of time to make money, Max," Abe concluded. "Come round and see us when you get time, won't you?"

Max nodded; and as he walked down the street to make a further canvass of the garment trade he passed the broad windows of the dairy lunchroom, where Morris was regaling Sam Green with a popular-price meal.

"Yes, Sam," Morris said as he caught sight of Max Kirschner's dejected figure, "you're lucky when you consider some people. You are still a young man and it ain't too late for you to start in as a new beginner somewhere. A young man could always make a living anyhow."

"Sure," Sam agreed, "but why should I start in as a new beginner, Mawruss? I already got an established business, y'understand; and if I could get a feller with a headpiece, Mawruss — never mind he

ain't got so much money — with a couple thousand dollars, we could run that feller from Sarahcuse out of town."

"What feller from Sarahcuse?" Morris asked.

"Ain't I told you?" Sam continued. "I thought I says that the reason the bank shuts down on me is a feller from Sarahcuse buys out them two suckers, Van Buskirk and Patterson, and he's going to operate the store as a branch house."

Morris nodded his head slowly.

"So, Sam," he said, "you are up against one of them sharks from Sarahcuse? I'm afraid you got a dead proposition in that store of yours."

Two cups of coffee had revived Sam Green's ambition, however, and he laughed aloud.

"You don't understand them people up in Cyprus, Mawruss," he said. "Strangers they don't like at all; and even me, though I lived in that town ten years, most of 'em wouldn't buy goods off of me because Van Buskirk and Patterson is born and raised in that town and they dealt with 'em ever since they was boys together. So you see I got ten years' start of that feller from Sarahcuse, Mawruss. If I could get some feller which he knows the garment business to go as partners together with me, and to put a little money into the store, we could yet do a good business there."

"How much money would you got to have?" Morris asked.

"Two thousand dollars, anyhow," Sam replied.

Morris tapped the table with his right index finger and frowned reflectively.

"The necktie pin alone must be worth a thousand dollars," he murmured almost to himself, "and two rings he got it which I know about must stand him in anyhow a thousand dollars more."

He thrust back his chair and rose to his feet.

"All right, Sam," he said aloud. "You got a little egg on your chin. Wipe it off and we'll go back to the store. I got an idee."

"On second thought, Sam," Morris said as they approached Potash & Perlmutter's place of business, "I wouldn't go up with me if I was you on account I don't want to say nothing to my partner just yet a while. Where are you staying, Sam?"

"I got a room at a hotel over on Third Avenue," Sam replied.

"Third Avenue!" Morris exclaimed. "That's a *Nachbarschaft* for a business man!"

He handed Sam a five-dollar bill.

"Go and get yourself a room over at the Prince Clarence," Morris said. "I'll be over there presently."

Nathan, the shipping clerk, was alone in the showroom when Morris entered.

"Ain't my partner come back yet, Nathan?" he demanded.

Nathan shook his head.

"Then tell him when he does come back that I've went up to the Prince Clarence to see a customer," Morris continued; "and if he asks what name tell him it's a new concern just starting."

Five minutes later he visited the business premises of Kleiman & Elenbogen, impelled thereto by a process of reasoning which involved the following points: Klinger & Klein manufactured a medium-price line and so did Kleiman & Elenbogen. Klinger & Klein's leader was The Girl in the Airship Gown, a title suggested by the syndicate's popular musical comedy of that name, while Kleiman & Elenbogen advertised their "strongest" garment as The Girl in the Motor-boat, out of compliment, of course, to the equally popular musical comedy recently produced by an antisyndicate manager. Both concerns catered to the same class of trade, and when either of the partners of Klinger & Klein referred in conversation to a member of the firm of Kleiman & Elenbogen, or vice versa, "sucker" was the mildest epithet employed.

Hence Morris Perlmutter argued that Max Kirchner would resort to Kleiman & Elenbogen's loft for comfort and advice; and as he stepped out of the elevator his surmise was confirmed by a nimbus emanating from the necktie of a person seated at the far end of the showroom.

"Hello, Max!" Morris cried; "who'd thought of seeing you here!"

Max rose to his feet and extended his right hand in greeting, whereat Morris noted that the four-carat diamond still sparkled on Max's finger.

"I just left your partner over at Hammersmith's, Morris," Max said.

"Sure, I know," Morris rejoined; "that feller makes a god out of his stomach, Max; but that ain't here nor there. Did you got something to do yet, Max?"

"I've got a whole lot to do trying to find a job, Morris, if that's what you mean," Max replied.

Morris glanced around the showroom, but both Kleiman and Elenbogen were absent.

"Where are they?" Morris asked.

"Out to lunch, I guess," Max replied.

"Good!" Morris exclaimed. "Them suckers would like to know everybody's business. You got a few minutes' time, Max?"

"Nothing but time," Max replied sadly.

"Then come uptown a few blocks with me," Morris said. "I got a proposition to make you."

Max shrugged his shoulders and put on his hat.

"Yes, Max," Morris continued as they walked toward the Prince Clarence Hotel, "I got a proposition to make to you, but first I would like to ask you something a question."

"Fire away," Max said.

"What did you done with that other diamond ring which you used to wear — the big one?"

"I have it home," Max replied. "What d'ye want to know for?"

"I want to lend you some money on it," Morris went on calmly; "also that pin which you got it and that there ring. I want to lend you three thousand dollars on 'em."

"Three thousand dollars!" Max exclaimed. "Why, the whole outfit isn't worth two!"

"What do I care?" Morris rejoined. "It's only a loan and I bet yer you would quick pay me back."

Max paused on the sidewalk and stared. "What's the matter, Morris?" he cried. "Are you sick?"

"Must a feller got to be sick to want to help you out, Max?" Morris said. "And anyhow, Max, it's as much a favour to us as it is to you."

By this time they had reached the Prince Clarence Hotel and Morris led the way to the café.

"Say, lookyhere, Max, the whole thing is this," he said after they were seated: "I'm going to lend you three thousand dollars to go into a business with a feller which he got a store in a small town upstate, and you're going to do it."

Max shook his head.

"No; I ain't," he answered. "I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks."

"If you sell goods wholesale you could sell 'em retail," Morris declared. "So, if you would listen to me I'll tell you what the proposition is."

Forthwith Morris unfolded to Max the history of Sam Green's mercantile establishment.

"And now, after all them years, Max," he concluded, "that feller gets practically run out of town because his bank shuts down on him."

"What's the name of the place?" Max asked.

"The name of the place?" Morris repeated.

"Yes," Max said, "the name of the town where the fellow comes from."

Morris scratched his head for a minute.

"I should remember the name of every little one-horse town where we got customers!" he said. "The name of the place don't matter, Max; it's got two thousand people living in it and practically only one store, because the way Sam Green is running his business now you couldn't call it a store at all."

Max rose from the table.

"I'll tell you the truth, Morris," he said; "what's the use wasting our time? The proposition ain't attractive. I was born and raised in a one-horse town upstate; and, even though I ain't been back for twenty years, I know what it's like. You'll have to excuse me."

"But, Max ——" Morris commenced.

"I needn't tell you that I'm more than grateful to you, Morris," Max concluded; "and if ever I want to dispose of my diamonds you shall have first chance."

He shook Morris's limp and unresisting hand and returned at once to the showroom of Kleiman & Elenbogen.

"Any one come for me, Miss Cashman?" he asked the bookkeeper, who was busily engaged in the preparation of the firm's monthly statement.

"Say, lookyhere, Kirschner," Louis Kleiman called from his office; "leave the girl alone, can't you? She's got enough to do tending to our business."

"I'm only asking her if she has any word for me," Max replied.

"I don't care what you are asking her," Kleiman said as he came out of his office to confront Max. "You are acting altogether too fresh around here, Kirschner. Do you pay rent here *oder* what?"

Max made no reply.

"And furthermore," Kleiman continued, "we got business to attend to here, Kirschner, and we couldn't afford to have no dead ones hanging around."

For a brief interval he scowled at Max, who turned on his heel and made for the elevator without another word. His applications for employment during the past few days had met with polite refusals coupled with cheerful prophecies of his early employment. To be sure, Max had taken little stock in this consoling optimism, but it had all helped to keep alive his spirits, which had sunk

again to their lowest ebb at Kleiman's epithet, "dead one."

After all, he was a dead one, he reflected as he stumbled along the sidewalk toward his boarding house on Irving Place. A man of sixty safely intrenched in his own business, with the confidence his wealth inspires, is in the very prime of life. But Max, with his health impaired and his employment taken away from him, felt and looked a decrepit old man as he tottered upstairs to his third-floor room and flung himself on the bed, where he lay for more than an hour staring at the ceiling.

During that interval he reviewed his career from the time he helped his father, a Prussian refugee of 1848, in the little country store upstate. Then came his father's death, followed by a clerkship in the large dry-goods business of his father's competitors. After this he had moved to New York; and from that time on he had followed the calling of a travelling salesman with varying success, until at sixty he found himself out of health and employment, with property of less than two thousand dollars as a reserve fund.

What a fool he had been not to accept Perlmutter's offer! Nevertheless it seemed futile for a man of sixty to make a new start in a strange town, especially since, in rural communities, business goes as much by favour and friendship as by commercial enterprise. Now, had he been offered a partner-

ship in a store in his native town, where it would be an easy matter to renew old acquaintance, he might have viewed the proposition differently.

He rose from the bed and sat down in an armchair, while his mind reverted to more pleasant topics. He pictured to himself his father's store underneath what the townspeople called the opera house. He saw again that dingy little hall, with its small proscenium opening guarded by a frayed old curtain, and he smiled as he remembered the landscape it bore. With the sophistication of his race he had enjoyed many a good laugh at the performance that had evoked the tears of his fellow townsmen. What Rubes they were, to be sure! And yet, what good fellows the boys had been! He recalled various ones by name and found himself wondering how they looked and whether they were married or single. Another half hour of like musing and suddenly he slapped his thigh.

"By jinks!" he said, "I'll do it. I need a vacation and I'm going to have it too."

When Morris returned to his place of business that afternoon he had packed Sam Green off to his store upstate with instructions to return in a week, during which Morris hoped to take the matter up with Abe. As for his hour-long absence from his place of business, Morris had provided himself with a plausible explanation in rebuttal to the quiet, ironical greeting that he knew would await him.

His program was a little upset, however, by Abe's inquiry, which was not in the least ironical.

"Loafer, where have you been?" Abe demanded.

"What d'ye mean, loafer?" Morris cried.

"I mean, while you are fooling away your time, Moe Griesman comes in here to see us and naturally he don't find none of us here; so he goes away again. From us he goes straight over to Sammet Brothers — and that's the way it goes."

"But, Abe," Morris protested, "I thought you told me he cancels his order this morning and buys only from Klinger & Klein."

"Sure, I know," Abe said; "but I suppose he finds out he couldn't find all the goods he wants with one concern and now he goes over to Sammet Brothers."

"How do you know he went over to Sammet Brothers?" Morris asked.

"A question! How do I know it?" Abe exclaimed. "Ain't he left a memorandum I should ring him up there?"

"Well, why don't you ring him up and find out what he wants?" Morris retorted.

"What do I care what he wants, Mawruss?" Abe rejoined. "Whatever he wants he don't want it now, because them two cut-throats would suck him dry of orders. Once a feller gets into the hands of Sammet Brothers they wouldn't let him go till he bought himself blue in the face."

"Ring him up, anyhow," Morris insisted; and the

next moment Abe was engaged in a heated altercation with "Central." Finally he heard Leon Sammet at the other end of the wire.

"Hello!" he yelled. "I want to speak with Mr. Griesman. Never mind what I want to speak with him about. That's my business. I ain't the fresh one — you are the fresh one. You are asking me something which you ain't got no right to ask me at all. You know well enough who it is talking."

After five minutes' further conversation, Leon relinquished his end of the wire to Griesman and immediately thereafter Abe's voice diminished in harshness till it became fairly flutelike with friendship and amiability.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Griesman!" he said. "Did you want to talk to me? Why, no, Mr. Griesman, he don't owe us nothing. He paid us this morning. Sure! What did you want to know for? Why should we sell his account, Mr. Griesman? He's a little slow, y'understand, but he's quite good. That's all right. Good-by."

When he returned to the showroom his face wore a puzzled expression.

"Well, Abe, what did he want?" Morris asked.

Abe shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know what he is up to, Mawruss," Abe said; "but he tells me he wants to buy from us Sam Green's account. So I told him Sam pays us this morning, and he rings off."

"Why should Moe Griesman want to buy from us Sam Green's account?" Morris muttered to himself; and then a wave of recollection came over him. Obviously it was Moe Griesman who had bought out Sam's competitors and this caused Sam's bank to shut down on him. Now Moe Griesman was attempting to buy up Sam's liabilities and close him up, so that there might be no competitor to Moe's new business in Cyprus. At length the humour of the situation appealed to Morris and he grinned vacuously at his partner.

"*Nu*," Abe growled; "what are you laughing at?"

"Nothing much, Abe," Morris replied. "I was only thinking — that's all, Abe. I was thinking to myself, Abe, what a joke it would be, supposing, for instance, Sam's check should come back N. G."

When Sam Green entered the smoker of the seven-thirty train from Syracuse to Cyprus, the following morning, a well-dressed man of sixty followed him down the aisle and sat down in the same seat with him.

"Have a cigar?" the stranger said.

"Much obliged," Sam replied as he took it. "If it is just the same to you I would smoke it after dinner."

"Sure!" the stranger rejoined, handing him another; "smoke that one after dinner and smoke this one now."

Sam grinned and after they had lit up he ventured the observation that it was fine weather.

"*Aber* it should be colder," he concluded, "for heavyweights."

"Are you in the clothing business?" the stranger asked.

"I got a sort of a store," Sam replied; "clothing and cloaks, and suits also. A dry-goods store in Cyprus."

"In Cyprus?" Sam's seatmate cried. "You don't tell me? I'm going down to Cyprus too."

"My fall buying is through," Sam said.

"I'm not selling goods this trip," the stranger replied. "I'm on a vacation."

"A vacation!" Sam murmured. "In Cyprus! That's a *medeena* for a vacation."

"There are worse places than Cyprus, my friend," said Sam's new-found acquaintance; and thereat began a conversation that lasted until the train finally drew into Cyprus.

"Would you mind telling me what is your name, please?" Sam asked as they prepared to leave the car.

"Certainly," the stranger said, handing his card to Sam.

"Kirschner!" Sam exclaimed, looking at the card. "Kirschner, *von unsere Leute?*"

"Sure!" Max Kirschner replied.

"Did your father once run a store under the opera house here?"

"That's right."

"And after he died the widder sells out to a man by the name Marcus Senft?"

"The same one," Max replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I bought out that feller, Marcus Senft," Sam replied, "and I got on my books yet debts which your mother sold to Senft for twenty-five cents on the dollar — and he sold to me for ten cents."

"I'll bet I know who owes 'em, too," Max commented.

"You could look 'em over if you want to," Sam said as they started to walk down the hilly lane from the depot to the main street.

"I will after I've washed up at the hotel," Max answered.

"Hotel?" Sam exclaimed. "What d'ye mean, hotel? You ain't going to no hotel. You're coming home with me. A feller *von unsere Leute* should come to Cyprus for a vacation and stay at a hotel! An idee!"

He linked his arm in Max's and together they walked to Sam's store.

"We'll take a look in here first before we go up to the house," Sam said as he opened the door. The next moment Sam Green was clasped to the ample bosom of Leah Green, who glanced inquiringly at Max Kirschner.

"Mommer," Sam announced, "this is Mr. Max Kirschner, which he ought to be like an old friend on account he was born and raised in this here town and his father run this very store."

Max looked around him at the shelves and showcases.

"The same fixtures," he muttered absently.

"He is only in town for a couple of days, mommer," Sam said hesitatingly, "so I thought we could easy fix up the spare room — ain't it?"

"Why, sure!" Mrs. Green replied as she shook Max's hand warmly. "Is the folks all well, Mr. Kirschner?"

Max smiled sadly.

"You can judge for yourself, Mrs. Green," he said, "because I'm all the folks there are."

"Oh, sure," Mrs. Green hastened to say. "I remember now; you never got married."

"Why, how do you know that?" Sam asked.

Mrs. Green nodded her head sideways in Sam's direction.

"He don't never hear nothing, Mr. Kirschner," she said. "With me the women folks *schmooses* all the time; and you could take it from me, Mr. Kirschner, they talk a whole lot more about what happens forty years ago as what happens last week already."

Max nodded as the store door opened and a woman of uncertain age entered.

"Good morning, Mis' Green," the newcomer said, her eyes glued on Max Kirschner. "I was just passin' by on my way to the depot and I remembered that I needed a spool of thread."

Mrs. Green passed behind the counter to reach the thread case.

"Going to Sarahcuse to-day, Mis' Duree?" she asked casually.

Mrs. Duryea blushed.

"I'm on my way to see my sister's little granddaughter," she explained; "she's just recovering from whooping cough."

"Would that be your sister Libby?" Max inquired.

Mrs. Duryea started visibly.

"I don't know as I ——" she began.

"That's so," Max continued. "Libby moved to Elmira. It must be Carrie. She married Lem Peters, didn't she?"

"Well, of all things!" Mrs. Duryea exclaimed. "Who in the world told you all that?"

"I just remembered it," Max said, holding out his hand. "How's Tom?"

Mrs. Duryea took the proffered hand gingerly.

"He's pretty spry," she said.

"Tell him Max Kirschner was asking for him," Max replied.

"You ain't Max Kirschner?" Mrs. Duryea cried.

"Just as sure as you're Hattie Watson," Max said. "How're all the children, Hattie?"

"All growed up and flew away," Mrs. Duryea replied. "What are you doing around here?"

Max's eyes twinkled mischievously.

"I'm selling goods for Mr. Green here," he declared. "Let's see, Hattie. Forty-two bust, I should say."

He snatched a garment from a rack near by.

"Here's a coat, Hattie, that would stand you in forty dollars in Syracuse," he said. "One of those big dry-goods stores there figures on a coat like this: garment, wholesale, twenty dollars; running a big store with elevators, electric lights and all modern improvements, ten dollars; advertising, five dollars; profit, five dollars — total, forty dollars. We figure here: cost of garment, twenty dollars; store expenses, fifty cents; profit, four dollars and fifty cents; total, twenty-five dollars. Put it on, Hattie, and let's see how you look in the garment."

"Well, I declare!" Mrs. Duryea exclaimed as she allowed herself to be assisted into the garment. "You take my breath away."

Max stepped back to survey the effect; and if the admiration expressed in his face was simulated, at least the friendliness of his smile was not.

"Now, Hattie, I want to tell you something," he declared: "If any one would say to me that I went to school with you I'd think they had a bad memory. I'd tell 'em it was your mother that sat next to me in Miss Johnson's room and not you."

Mrs. Duryea fairly beamed as she strutted up and down the store.

"Well, Max," she said at last, "let me bring my friend Mis' Williams in this afternoon and we'll decide on it then."

"But I thought you were going to Syracuse," Max rejoined.

"I was," Mrs. Duryea said as she started to leave; "but I ain't now."

The news of Max Kirschner's return spread through Cyprus like a brush fire, and twenty minutes after Mrs. Duryea had left Sam Green's store Max was holding a levee behind the old counter. By two o'clock he had greeted over fifty old friends and at least twenty of them had made purchases in amounts varying from five to thirty dollars.

"As sure as you're standing there, Mr. Kirschner," Sam declared, "I sold more goods this morning as in the last two months."

Max grinned delightedly. His face was flushed and he looked at least ten years younger as he patted Sam on the shoulder.

"Look out for the rush this afternoon," he said. "If we only had a better assortment, Green, I think we could keep this up for a week longer and after that we could do a good, steady business."

"We?" Sam exclaimed.

Max coloured and smiled in an embarrassed fashion.

"Of course I mean you," he said.

"Why 'of course'?" Sam asked; and Mrs. Green nodded vigorously. "Why not we, Mr. Kirschner?"

"Well, you see, I haven't sold goods at retail for so long," Max explained, "that I really don't know how."

Sam turned to Mrs. Green with a quick shrug.

"*Was hast du gehört?*" he cried. "He don't know how! If I wouldn't know how to sell goods the way you don't know how, Mr. Kirschner, I would quick build up a good business here. Tell me, Mr. Kirschner, how much longer do you got a vacation, because I'd like to make you a proposition. You could stay with me here for the rest of your vacation and I would give you half of the profits over the cost price of every garment you sell. How's that?"

"Very generous," Max said; "but you don't know what you're offering me, Green, because the vacation might last for several years."

"Several years!" Sam repeated. "You mean you are retired from business, Mr. Kirschner?"

"Exactly," Max answered; "with a fortune of two diamond rings, a diamond pin, and eight hundred and sixty-five dollars cash."

Sam and Mrs. Green stared at him incredulously.

"In other words, Green," Max concluded, "I have just been fired out of a job as travelling

salesman, which I held for twenty years, and I don't see a chance of getting another one."

For a moment Sam and his wife exchanged glances.

"Mr. Kirschner," Sam said, "how much can you get for them diamonds?"

"Fifteen hundred dollars, I guess," Max replied.

"Then what is the use talking nonsense, Mr. Kirschner?" Sam cried excitedly. "Come along with me over to the Farmers' National Bank and we'll see Mr. Fuller; and if he would renew my accommodation for a thousand dollars you and me would go as partners together and *fertig*."

"Fuller!" Max cried. "That ain't Wilbur M. Fuller, is it?"

"That's the one," Sam declared.

"Then we'll not only get him to renew the accommodation, Sam, but we'll sell him some shirts and neckties as well. He and I clerked together in Van Buskirk & Patterson's."

As a sequel to Max's visit to the Farmers' National Bank, Abe and Morris waited in vain for the return of Sam's check.

"How did you know the check wasn't good, Mawruss?" Abe asked his partner a week later.

"I ain't said it ain't good, Abe," Morris protested; "only I seen Markson, which he works for Klinger & Klein as a bookkeeper, in Hammersmith's to-day and he says that Moe Griesman goes round trying to buy up all Sam Green's bills payable; and

he's got about five hundred dollars' worth now already."

"Sure, I know he did," Abe replied. "He got from Kleiman & Elenbogen Sam's three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar debt for two hundred and seventy-five cash and Sam sends 'em the check for the full amount the day before yesterday. I seen Louis Kleiman yesterday and he was feeling pretty sore, I bet yer."

Morris nodded. He had been completely mystified about Sam's affairs since the arrival of a letter from Cyprus addressed to Morris personally, wherein Sam repaid the money advanced for his hotel accommodation and announced that he had abandoned for the present his intention of returning to New York. Morris's mystification was hardly abated by the following letter, which arrived on the heels of the conversation above set forth:

SAMUEL GREEN & CO.
DRY-GOODS AND NOTIONS
THE K. & M. SYLPHSHAPE CORSET

CYPRUS, NEW YORK, MAY 1, 1910.

GENTS: We inclose you herewith memorandum of order. Kindly ship same within ten days by fast freight, and oblige

Yours truly, SAMUEL GREEN & CO.

P. S. You should telegraph Farmers' National Bank for references if you ain't satisfied to ship without it. Business is good. S. GREEN.

Morris Perlmutter's relations with Sol Klinger

retained their cordiality despite the rupture between Abe Potash and Klinger & Klein. To be sure, Moe Griesman's defection had rankled, but Morris consoled himself with the maxim, "Business is business"; and when he met Sol Klinger in Hammersmith's restaurant during the first week of the spring buying season he greeted Sol cordially. His friendly advance, however, met with a decided rebuff.

"What's the matter now, Sol?" Morris asked.

Sol nodded his head slowly.

"It's a great world, Mawruss," he said.

Morris agreed with him. "There's business enough in it for everybody anyhow, Sol, if that's what you mean," he replied.

"In lots of places, yes, but in others, no," Sol said. "But with some people, Mawruss, they're like a snake in the grass, which it bites the hand that feeds it."

"What's Moe Klein been doing now?" Morris asked.

"Moe Klein?" Sol cried. "What d'ye mean, Moe Klein? I ain't talking about Moe Klein at all. I am talking about Max Kirschner, Mawruss. There's a feller which we give him for twenty years good wages, Mawruss, and what do we get for it? After he leaves us, Mawruss —"

"Left you?" Morris interrupted. "Why, I always thought you fired him."

"Sure, we fired him," Sol continued. "A lowlife

bum which he makes always a hog of himself, why shouldn't we fire him? And then, Mawruss, when we are taking on Moe Greisman's nephew, Rabiner, what does that sucker Max Kirschner do? He turns around and fixes up with a feller by the name Sam Green, in Cyprus, to go as partners together in Sam Green's store up there. And mind you, Mawruss, Moe Griesman had just bought out Sam Green's competitors, Van Buskirk & Patterson. And Max Kirschner knows all the time that the only reason that we took on Mozart Rabiner was on account of his uncle, Moe Griesman."

Sol Klinger was so interested in his own narrative that he completely failed to notice its effect on Morris Perlmutter, who sat with his jaw dropping lower and lower, while great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

"Yes, Mawruss," Sol continued; "Moe Griesman even comes down himself from Sarahcuse to Cyprus to superintend things. Five thousand dollars fixtures he puts in and forty thousand dollars he pays them two yokels, Van Buskirk & Patterson, for the good-will, stock, and store building; and what happens? For a whole month Moe sits in that store and not a hundred dollars' worth of goods goes out of the place, Mawruss; and why? It seems that Sam Green and Max Kirschner does all the business because Max Kirschner is born and raised in Cyprus and knows everybody in the place."

"Max was born and raised in Cyprus?" Morris gasped.

"That's what I said," Sol replied. "That's a *Nachbarschaft* for a feller to be born in! What?"

Morris nodded and rose wearily to his feet.

"I never could remember the name of the place even, at all," he said. "Well, I guess now I would be getting back to the store."

"You got my permission," Sol said as Morris started from the restaurant. These were destined to be the last words addressed to Morris by Sol Klinger in many a long day, for the moving incidents which awaited Morris's return to his showroom put an end to all friendship between him and Sol.

Imprimis, when Morris entered, Moe Griesman was seated in the firm's private office, the centre of an animated group of four. "Hello, there, Mawruss!" Moe shouted; "there's a couple of gentlemen here which would like to talk to you."

He indicated a ruddy, clean-shaven person of approximately fifty years, who on closer inspection proved to be Max Kirschner shorn of his white moustache and without the attendant nimbus of his diamond pin. The other individual was even harder to identify by reason of a neat-fitting business suit of brown and a general air of prosperity; but in him Morris descried the person of what had once been Sam Green.

"Morris, you old rascal," Max cried, "when you

took me over to the Prince Clarence Hotel that day why didn't you tell me that the man you wanted me to go into business with ran a store in Cyprus?"

"I couldn't remember the name of the place at all," Morris admitted.

Abe gazed at him sorrowfully.

"The fact is, gentlemen," he said, "my partner ain't got no head at all."

Sam Green's face flushed in recollection of the phrase.

"Never mind," he said fervently; "he's got anyhow a heart."

"And I've got a stomach," Max Kirschner added irrelevantly. "At least, I've recovered one since I've been eating Leah Green's good cooking."

Sam and Moe Griesman smiled sympathetically.

"Well, what's the use wasting time here, boys?" Moe said at last. "Let's explain to Mawruss about the new combination. Me and Max and Sam Green here have agreed to go as partners together in Cyprus under the name 'The Cyprus Dry-goods Company.' In a small town like Cyprus competition is nix."

"Good!" Morris exclaimed. "I'm glad to hear it. Is the Sarahcuse store included too?"

"A ten per cent. interest they got, although I am going to run my Sarahcuse business and these here boys is going to run the Cyprus end," Moe continued. "And now, Abe, as Max has got to pick out a lot of goods for the Cyprus store and I want to

do the same for my Sarahcuse store, let's get to work."

For three hours without cessation they laboured over Potash & Perlmutter's sample line until garments to an amount in excess of five thousand dollars had been ordered.

When Max Kirschner saw the total of Moe Griesman's selection for the Syracuse store he emitted a low whistle.

"Say, Moe," he said, "ain't you going to give your nephew, Rabiner, any show at all this season?"

"*Oser a Stück*," Griesman declared. "I done enough for that feller when I got him a three years' contract with Klinger & Klein."

CHAPTER SIX

A PRESENT FOR MR. GEIGERMANN

"WELL, Abe," Morris Perlmutter declared, one morning in midwinter, "you look like you had a pretty lively session last night."

Abe nodded slowly. "I want to tell you something, Mawruss," he said solemnly; "I would do anything at all to hold a customer's trade, Mawruss. I would go on theayter with him. I would *schmier* him tenspots when he's got the bid already, and I would go *bate* on hands which even a rotten player like you couldn't lose, Mawruss. But before I would got to sit through such another evening like last night, Mawruss, Felix Geigermann should never buy from us again a dollar's worth more goods. That's all I got to say."

"Why, what was the matter?" Morris asked.

"Well, in the first place, Mawruss, to show you what a liar that feller Geigermann is, he brings out a fiddle which he tells us is three hundred years old."

"Yow! Three hundred years old!" Morris exclaimed skeptically. "A fiddle three hundred

years old would be worth, the very least, a hundred or a hundred and fifty dollars."

"That's what I told him, Mawruss," Abe said. "I says to him if I would got a fiddle which it is worth that much money I would quick sell it and buy something which it is anyhow useful, like a diamond ring *oder* a scarfpin. But Geigermann only laughs at me, Mawruss; he says he don't own the fiddle, Mawruss, but that somebody loaned it him. Even if he would own it, he wouldn't take two hundred dollars for it."

"My worries, if he owns the fiddle *oder* not, Abe!" Morris commented.

"Sure, I know, Mawruss; but that ain't the point. Afterward Mozart Rabiner comes in; and if I would be Felix Geigermann, Mawruss, and a salesman comes into my house and gets fresh with a pianner which the least it stands Geigermann in is a hundred dollars, Mawruss, I would kick him into the street yet."

"What is Mozart Rabiner doing there, Abe?" Morris inquired anxiously.

Abe preserved a cheerful demeanour, although it was the circumstance of Mozart Rabiner's prominence at Geigermann's musicale that had rendered the evening so unbearable.

"Well, Mawruss," he explained, "you don't suppose that Geigermann buys all his goods from us?"

Morris elevated his eyebrows gloomily.

"I don't suppose nothing, Abe," he said; "but once you let a shark like Rabiner get in with Geigermann, Klinger & Klein would give him the privilege to cut our price till they run us right out of there."

"It's an open market, Mawruss," Abe said, "and anyhow I am doing all I can to keep that feller's business. You would think so if you would of been there last night, Mawruss. First a lady in one of them two-piece velvet suits — afterward I see the jacket; a ringer for our style forty-two-twenty, Mawruss — she gets up on the floor, Mawruss, and she hollers bloody murder, Mawruss. I never heard the like since that Italiener girl which we got working for us on White Street catches her finger in the buttonhole machine. Mozart Rabiner plays for her on the pianner, Mawruss; and when she gets through, the way Rabiner jollies her you would think she would be buying goods for Marshall Field yet. After that, Geigermann takes the fiddle and him and Moe Rabiner gets together by the pianner and for three quarters of an hour, Mawruss, they work away like they was being paid for it."

"Moe Rabiner gets paid for it, I bet yer," Morris agreed.

"What a noise them fellers make it, Mawruss!" Abe continued. "Honestly, I thought my head was busting; and when they get finished the lady

which done the hollering asks 'em who the piece is by, Mawruss — and who do you think Rabiner says?"

"How should I know who he says?" Morris retorted angrily.

"Richard Strauss," Abe replied.

"Richard Strauss?" Morris asked. "You mean that feller Strauss of Klipmann, Strauss & Bleimer, I suppose?"

"It must be the same feller," Abe said. "Seemingly everybody there knows him; and besides, Mawruss, that feller Strauss is another one of them musical fellers too. Only the other day Klipmann tells me that feller spends a fortune going on the opera with customers."

"But I thought Klipmann's partner was called Milton Strauss," Morris said.

"Maybe it was Milton Strauss," Abe continued. "Milton *oder* Richard, I couldn't remember. It was one of them up-to-date names anyhow; and, mind you, Mawruss, that feller Rabiner has got the nerve to ask me if I didn't like Strauss. What could I say? If that cut-throat Rabiner thinks he is going to get me to knock a competitor in front of Geigermann he's mistaken. 'Sure I like him,' I says; 'why not?' 'In that case,' Moe says, 'we'll play some more of this.' 'Go as far as you like,' I says, and they kept it up till the elevator boy rings the bell and says a lady on the top floor is

sick. I don't blame her, Mawruss; I was pretty sick myself."

Morris nodded sympathetically.

"So, then, Mawruss," Abe continued, "Geigermann takes the fiddle again and shows it to us, Mawruss; and he says on the back is a ruby varnish."

"Rubies is pretty high now, Abe," Morris said; "carat for carat, rubies is a whole lot more expensive as diamonds."

"*Gewiss*, Mawruss," Abe cried; "but I seen the back of the fiddle, Mawruss, and if the varnish on it was made from rubies, Mawruss, I would eat it. The fiddle was an ordinary fiddle like any other fiddle; only one thing I see, Mawruss — on the inside is a little piece from paper, y'understand, and printed on it is the name from some Italiener or another, with some figures on it. Geigermann says it was stuck in there three hundred years ago, when the fiddle was made. And you ought to see Moe Rabiner, Mawruss. He looks at that fiddle for pretty near half an hour. He turns it upside down and he blows into it and he takes his finger and wets it and rubs on it, and he smells it, and *Gott weiss* what he don't do with it."

"He's a dangerous feller, Abe," Morris commented. "He don't never stop at nothing to sell goods."

"Well, I wasn't much behind him, Mawruss," Abe said. "When he smells it, I smell it. He wets

his finger, I wet my finger. Everything what that sucker does to that fiddle, I did. He couldn't get nothing on me. Mawruss. If he would offer to eat the fiddle, y'understand, I would got just so good appetite as he got it, Mawruss, and don't you forget it. I ain't going to let go so easy."

"Might you couldn't help yourself maybe," Morris commented.

"You shouldn't worry, Mawruss," Abe concluded. "I sold Felix Geigermann since way before the Spanish War already, and I would sooner expect my own brother — supposing I got one — to turn us down as him."

Despite Abe's optimism, however, the order for spring goods that Felix Geigermann bestowed on them a month later fell short of their expectations by over five hundred dollars.

"Business couldn't be so good with Felix this year, Mawruss," Abe commented.

"Don't you jolly yourself, Abe," Morris replied. "It ain't so much that business is bad with Felix as it is better with Klinger & Klein. Them two cut-throats ain't paying Rabiner good money for only playing the pianner. He's got to sell goods too."

"That's all right, Mawruss," Abe said. "Let him go ahead and *spiel* pianner till he's blue in the face. Sooner or later Geigermann would find out what stickers them Klinger & Klein garments is, and then Moe Rabiner couldn't sell him no more of

them goods, not if he would be a whole orchestra already."

The personality of Aaron Shellak was simply thrown away on the garment trade. His lean, scholarly face, surmounted by a shock of wavy brown hair, would have assured his success as a virtuoso, and no one knew this better than his brother, Professor Ladislaw Wcelak, under whose tuition he had struggled through the intricacies of the first and second positions.

"If you would only forget you ain't got a pair of shears in your right hand, Aaron," the professor said, "and listen to what I am telling you, in two years' time you are making more money than all the garment cutters together. All you got to do is to play just halfway good."

"I suppose you're a millionaire, ain't it?" Aaron rejoined. "And you can play fiddle like a streak." The professor heaved a great sigh as he passed his hand over his bald head.

"With your hair, Aaron," he said, "I could make fifty thousand a year on concert towers alone, to say nothing of two recitals up on Fifty-seventh Street. But if a feller only got one arm, Aaron, he would better got a show to be a fiddle virtuoso as if he would be bald."

Thus encouraged Aaron persevered with his practice for some months; but, despite the patient

instruction of his brother Louis the garment cutter's wrist still handicapped him.

"That's a legato phrase," Louis Shellak cried impatiently, one night in mid-February. "With one bow you got to play it."

"Which phrase are you talking about," Aaron asked — "the one that goes 'Ta-ra-reera, ta-ra-reera'?"

He sang the two measures in a clear tenor voice, whereat Louis snatched the violin from his brother's grasp and, seating himself at the piano, he struck the major triad of C natural with force sufficient to wreck the instrument.

"Sing 'Ah'! " he commanded.

Aaron attacked the high C like a veteran and Professor Ladislaw Wcelak leaped from the piano stool with an inarticulate cry. Immediately thereafter he secured a strangle-hold on his brother and kissed him Budapest fashion on both cheeks.

"To-morrow night already you will commence lessons with the best teacher money could buy," he declared.

"Whose money?" Aaron Shellak inquired, as he wiped away the marks of his brother's affection — "yours or mine?"

"Me — I ain't got no money," Louis admitted.

"Me neither," Aaron said. He was the sole support of his mother and sisters, for Louis, as *chef d'orchestre* in a Second Avenue restaurant,

constantly anticipated his salary over *stuss* or *tarrok* in the rear of his employer's café.

"How much would it take?" he asked Louis after a silence of several minutes.

Louis shrugged.

"Who knows?" he replied. "Fifty dollars *oder* a hundred, perhaps."

Aaron nodded; and the next day, when he entered Potash & Perlmutter's place of business, he carried with him his violin and bow in a black leather case. Thus it happened that the strains of Godard's *Berceuse* saluted Abe as he stepped from the elevator that morning; and without removing his coat he made straight for the cutting room.

"*Koosh!*" he bellowed. "What are we running here, anyhow, Shellak — a cloak-and-suit house *oder* a theayter?"

Aaron hastily replaced the instrument in its case.

"I am only showing it to Nathan," he mumbled by way of explanation. "Might he would like to buy it maybe."

"If you want to sell fiddles, Shellak," Abe said, "do it outside business hours. That's all I got to say."

He proceeded at once to the showroom, where Morris was peeling off his overcoat. The latter greeted Abe with a sour nod. "I am sick and tired of it, Abe," he declared. "Everybody is stealing our business."

"What d'ye mean, everybody's stealing our business?" Abe asked.

"Last night I am sitting in the Harlem Winter Garden with Felix Geigermann, and Leon Sammet butts in on us and tells Geigermann he's got a cousin which he could play shello, and Geigermann says that he should come around to the house next Tuesday and play it with him and Rabiner."

Abe shrugged his shoulders.

"My *tzuris* if he does, Mawruss," he said; "because while I don't know nothing about this here game, y'understand, a good way to lose a customer is to play cards with him."

"What are you talking nonsense, Abe?" Morris cried. "Shello ain't cards. A shello is a fiddle which you play it with your knees."

"For my part he could play it with his nose, Mawruss," Abe declared hotly. "Do you mean to told me, Mawruss, that a business man like Geigermann is going to buy a line of goods like Sammet Brothers got it just because Leon Sammet's cousin plays a fiddle with his knees?"

"Yow! His cousin?" Morris exclaimed. "He's as much got a cousin which he plays the shello as I got one. He's going to give some greenhorn a couple of dollars to go with him to Geigermann's house and play the fiddle; and the first thing you know, Abe, Geigermann is buying from him a big

bill of goods and all the time our orders gets smaller and smaller till we lose his trade altogether."

Abe laughed mirthlessly and bit the end off his after-breakfast cigar.

"If I would worry myself the way you do, Mawruss, every time a competitor says 'Hello' to a customer of ours," he said as he turned away, "I would gone crazy in the head *schon* long since ago already."

Nevertheless he pondered Leon Sammet's move all the morning, and after Morris had gone to lunch he paced the showroom floor for more than a quarter of an hour in an effort to formulate some plan for regaining Geigermann's business. His reflections were at length interrupted by a faint scraping from the rear of the store. Once more Aaron Shellak was entertaining the cutting-room staff with a pianissimo rendition of Godard's *Berceuse;* but even as Abe tiptoed across the showroom to crush the performance with an explosive "*Koosh!*" the melody ceased.

"That's a genu-ine Amati," Aaron said, "and you could see for yourself — inside here is the label."

Abe stopped short. The word "Amati" brought back to him the scene of Felix Geigermann's musicale, and his heart thumped unpleasantly as he listened to Aaron's exhibition of salesmanship.

"Moreover," Aaron continued, "here is the scroll

which it is ever so much finer as them other fiddles you could buy for fifty *oder* sixty dollars. Look at the varnish on the back, Nathan — shines like rubies, ain't it?"

"What would I do with a fiddle, Aaron?" Nathan Schenkman, the shipping clerk, asked.

"You I ain't saying at all," Aaron said; "but you got a little boy Nathan."

"He ain't a year old yet," Nathan interrupted.

"Sure, I know," Shellak went on; "but now is the time, Nathan. You couldn't begin too early. Look at Kubelik and Kreisler and all them fellers. When they was eating from a bottle already the old man give 'em a fiddle to play with, and to-day where are they? In one concert tower alone, Nathan, them fellers makes from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars."

He paused so that Nathan might better apprehend the alluring prospect.

"And I'll let you have it for a hundred and fifty dollars, Nathan," he concluded. "Ten dollars down and two dollars a week till paid. No interest nor nothing."

At this juncture Abe burst into the cutting room.

"*Nu*, Shellak!" he roared. "What are you trying to do? Skin a poor feller like Nathan, which he got a wife and a child to support?"

"What d'ye mean, skin him?" Aaron retorted. "I ain't no crook, Mr. Potash."

"That's all right, Shellak," Abe went on. "I heard every word you are saying. Come inside; I want to talk to you."

Aaron's face blanched and he trembled visibly.

"But, Mr. Potash ——" he began.

"Never mind!" Abe bellowed; "take that fiddle and all that *machshovos* you got there and come in here."

Abe led the way to the front of the showroom, followed by the crestfallen Shellak, who deposited fiddle, bow, and case on a sample table.

"Say, lookyhere, Shellak," Abe said in kindly tones, "what the devil are you trying to sell a *Schnorrer* like that a good fiddle? Why don't you give me a show?"

The blood surged suddenly to Aaron's face.

"You!" he stammered. "Why, Mr. Potash, I never knew you was interested in violins."

"Sure; why not?" Abe replied. "Let me have a look at it."

First he squinted into the right "eff" hole and he grunted in approval as he spied the label, which read as follows:

NICOLAUS AMATI CREMONENSIS
Faciebat Anno 1670

"Do you know anything about them old violins?" Aaron asked anxiously.

Abe smiled in a superior way.

"Not a whole lot, Aaron," he said, but by the time he had finished his examination Aaron became convinced that his employer was indeed one of the *cognoscenti*. First Abe turned the violin upside down and scrutinized the scroll, neck, belly, and back. Then he blew into the "eff" holes; and wetting his finger he rubbed the varnish. For five minutes he pursued the tactics of Mozart Rabiner and even added one or two fancy touches on his own account, until at length he laid down the instrument with a profound sigh.

"Always the same thing, Shellak," he said; "people says it is a genu-ine and it ain't."

Aaron took up his violin and looked at it through new eyes.

"Why ain't it genu-ine?" he asked.

"I should tell you why it ain't!" Abe exclaimed. "If you would know what I know about them things, Shellak, you wouldn't ask me such a question at all. Do you doubt my word?"

"Why should I doubt your word, Mr. Potash?" Aaron said. "In the inside is the paper and that's all I know about it. So, if you would give me a hundred and fifty dollars, Mr. Potash, you could keep the fiddle, bow, case *und fertig*."

For some minutes they haggled over the bargain, and at length they closed at a hundred and twenty-five dollars, for which Abe gave Shellak his personal check.

"Do you know anything about them old violins?"

"And you shouldn't say nothing to Mr. Perlmutter about it," Abe concluded, "because I want to make a present of it as a surprise to my partner."

When Abe came downtown the following morning he wore so marked an air of pleased mystery that Morris became irritated.

"Let me in on this too, Abe," he said.

"Let you in on what, Mawruss?" Abe asked innocently. "I don't know what you mean at all."

"You know very well what I mean," Morris rejoined. "You ain't coming around here grinning like a barn door for nothing."

"I give you right about that, Mawruss," Abe said. "I got in a good *Schlag* at Leon Sammet and Moe Rabiner last night, Mawruss, I bet yer. I got from Geigermann a repeat order on them two-piece velvet suits — seven hundred and fifty dollars; and do you know how I done it?"

"Chloroformed him," Morris suggested ironically.

"That's all right, Mawruss," Abe retorted. "Go ahead and joke if you want to. Maybe I couldn't play the fiddle with my knees and maybe I don't know nothing about *spieling* pianners neither, y'understand; but I got a little gumption, too, Mawruss, and don't you forget it."

He retired to the cutting room with a set

expression on his face, as though to imply that wild horses could not drag from him the secret of Felix Geigermann's renewed patronage.

For twenty minutes he remained firm in his resolve not to gratify his partner's curiosity; and then as Morris continued to whistle cheerfully over the sample-rack in the front of the loft, he returned to the showroom.

"Yes, Mawruss," he said; "some fellers if they would do what I done with Felix Geigermann they wouldn't give their partner a minute's peace. For months together, Mawruss, they would throw it up to him."

"What is the difference, Abe, if a salesman gets orders, how he gets 'em," Morris rejoined, "so long as he ain't padding his expense account?"

"What d'ye mean, padding my expense account?" Abe cried. "A hundred and twenty-five dollars the fiddle costed me and that's all I charge up."

"The fiddle!" Morris exclaimed. "What fiddle?"

"The fiddle which I give Geigermann last night," Abe continued; "and if you don't believe me you could ask Shellak."

"Shellak?" Morris repeated. "What the devil are you talking about, Abe?"

"Yes, Shellak," Abe went on, "the cutter. He comes round here yesterday with a fiddle, Mawruss, which he wants to sell it to Nathan Schenkman.

So I give him a hundred and twenty-five dollars for it *und fertig.*"

"You give Shellak a hundred and twenty-five dollars?" Morris exploded. "Are you crazy, *oder* what?"

"It was a genu-ine Amati," Abe explained; "and so soon as I seen it, Mawruss, I thought to myself if them cut-throats could sell Geigermann a big bill of goods just by playing on fiddles, y'understand, what sort of an order could I get out of him supposing I should give him a fiddle yet? So that's what I done, Mawruss; and he did, Mawruss, and I was right. Ain't it?"

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," Morris began slowly; "let me get this thing correct. You are paying Shellak a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a fiddle which you are giving Geigermann."

"You got it right, Mawruss," Abe said. "It was a genu-ine Amati."

"For a hundred and twenty-five dollars expenses you are getting an order for seven hundred and fifty dollars, Abe," Morris said relentlessly; "and some fellers would throw it up to their partners for months together yet."

"It was a genu-ine Amati, Mawruss," Abe repeated for the third time, "and for a genu-ine Amati, Mawruss, a hundred and twenty-five dollars is no price at all."

"Sure, I know, Abe," Morris said bitterly; "to

you a hundred and twenty-five dollars is nothing at all. We are made of money, Abe, ain't it? What do you care you are spending a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a fiddle when for seventy-five dollars on Lenox Avenue and a Hundred and Sixteenth Street, with my own eyes I seen it, you could buy a square pianner with a stool and scarf yet, as good as new. If you want to *schenk* the feller something, why didn't you told me? What for a present is a fiddle, Abe, when for half the money we could give him a pianner yet?"

Abe hung his head in embarrassment.

"But Mawruss," he said, "it was a genu-ine Amati."

For one brief moment Morris choked with rage.

"Genu-ine hell!" he roared, and plunged away to the office.

For the remainder of the morning Abe went about his work in crestfallen silence, although Morris, after subjecting Geigermann's order to a little cost bookkeeping on the back of an envelope broke once more into a cheerful whistle.

"Well, Abe," he said at twelve o'clock, "what is *vorbei* is *vorbei*. It ain't no use crying over sour milk, so I am going out to lunch."

"What d'ye mean, sour milk, Mawruss?" Abe retorted. "The sour milk is all on your side, Mawruss, because I am telling you it was a genu-ine Amati."

"All right, Abe," Morris said, as he rang for the elevator; "you told me that *schon* twenty times already. I wouldn't give you two dollars for all them genu-ine fellers' fiddles in creation; and that's all there is to it."

With this ultimatum he stepped into the elevator and five minutes afterward he sat at a table in Hammersmith's restaurant and beguiled with a dill pickle the interval between the giving and filling of his order. At the table next to him sat an animated group, of which Louis Kleiman was the centre.

"Yes, sirree, sir!" Louis declared, in defiance of the law of scandal and libel; "six months I would give the feller at the outside. A feller couldn't attend to business if he would set up till all hours of the night playing fiddle with that lowlife, Rabiner. That ain't all yet, neither! Yesterday he pays for a fiddle three thousand dollars."

"For a fiddle three thousand dollars!" cried one of the group, and the good half of a dill pickle fell from Morris's limp grasp.

"That's what I said," Louis continued; "for three thousand dollars yet he is buying a fiddle. With my own eyes I seen it in the paper this morning; and when a feller puts three thousand dollars into a fiddle, y'understand, he could kiss himself good-by with his business."

At this juncture Morris beckoned to the waiter.

"Say," he said hoarsely, "never mind that roast spring lamb and stuffed tomatoes. Bring me instead a rye-bread tongue sandwich and a cup coffee."

After the waiter had gone Morris settled back in his chair and listened once more to the conversation at the next table.

"All right; then I'm a liar," he heard Louis say. "I tell you I got the paper in my overcoat pocket right now."

Louis rose from his seat and securing the morning paper from his overcoat he read aloud the following item:

PAYS HEAVILY FOR AMATI VIOLIN

Mrs. Helene Karanyi, widow of the celebrated violinist, Bela Karanyi, has sold her husband's favourite Amati at a price said to be over three thousand dollars. The purchaser is Felix Geigermann, who said yesterday that the violin had been in his possession for some time, and that there was no doubt of its authenticity. It was presented to Karanyi by the late Prince Ludovic Esterhazy, whose collection of Cremona violins, now preserved by his son, is said to be the finest in the world. Mr. Geigermann is the well-known Harlem dry-goods merchant.

Louis Kleiman folded the paper and laid it on the table.

"That's the way it goes, boys," he said in heightened tones, for by this time he had caught sight of Morris. "A new beginner comes to you and you give him a little line of credit, y'understand, and

pretty soon he is buying more and more goods till he gets to be a big *macher* like Felix Geigermann. Then either one of two things happens to you: Either he begins to think you are too small for him and he turns around and buys goods from some other sucker, y'understand, *oder* he goes to work and throws away his money left and right on oiter-mobiles *oder* fiddles, and sooner or later he busts up on you; and that's the way it goes."

"You shouldn't worry yourself, Kleiman," Morris cried, turning around in his chair. "Felix Geigermann ain't going to fail just yet a while."

"Me worry?" Kleiman retorted. "For my part, Felix Geigermann could fail to-morrow yet; he don't owe me one cent, nor never would. I ain't looking to sell no goods to fiddlers, Perlmutter. I am dealing only with merchants."

"Furthermore," Morris went on, "if Felix Geigermann hears it you are making a break like this — that he's going to fail yet, and all sorts of crooks you are calling him, Kleiman — he would sue you in the courts for a hundred thousand dollars yet. From a big mouth a feller could get himself into a whole lot of trouble."

Kleiman scrambled hastily to his feet and seized his hat.

"What are you talking nonsense, Perlmutter?" he exclaimed. "I ain't said nothing out of the way about Geigermann. You are the one what's

putting the words into my mouth already. Did you ever hear anything like it! — I am saying Geigermann is going to fail? An idee! I never said nothing of the kind. All I am saying is what is right here in the paper, black on white; and if you don't believe me you could read it for yourself."

He handed the paper to Morris; and, as the latter commenced to read over the Geigermann paragraph, Kleiman and his friends slunk hurriedly out of the restaurant. For nearly half an hour Morris pored over the newspaper; then he choked down the sandwich and swallowed the coffee, which by this time was cold.

"Admitting I am only your partner, Mawruss," Abe began as Morris entered the showroom a few minutes later, "don't I got to eat too? And in the second place, Mawruss, if you got to make a hog of yourself, do it at dinner-time at home, because when a feller takes up a whole hour having his lunch, Mawruss, he naturally stuffs himself so full that he ain't no good for the rest of the day."

A lump in Morris's throat, which may or may not have been the tongue sandwich, prevented him from replying; but at last he swallowed it and, after removing his hat and coat, he carefully unfolded the paper.

"Don't hurry out to lunch, Abe," he said. "I could save you money. I got something to tell

you which it would take away your appetite so you wouldn't want even a cup coffee."

Abe paused with his hand on the hatrack.

"What d'ye mean?" he demanded.

"I mean I am eating only a tongue sandwich and a cup coffee in Hammersmith's just now," Morris went on, "and who should I see at the next table but Louis Kleiman of Kleiman & Elenbogen. That's a dirty lowlife, that feller, Abe! A cutthroat like him should be making money in business! Honestly, Abe, when I see decent, respectable fellers like ——"

"Say, lookyhere, Mawruss," Abe said, "let me go to my lunch, will you? I'm hungry."

"Hungry, *sagt er!*" Morris retorted. "A feller makes a god of his stomach, y'understand, and his business is nothing at all. For all you care, Abe, our whole trade could fail on us, so long as you could eat. Everybody says the same thing; the feller's ——"

"Do me the favour, Mawruss," Abe begged; "tell me about it afterward. All I am eating for my breakfast is one egg, so sure as you're standing there."

"All right, Abe; I wouldn't keep you no longer," Morris said. "If you could got it in your heart to eat, when one of your best customers is busting up on you, go ahead."

"Our best customer?" Abe cried — "Mandelberger Brothers & Company?"

"*Geh weg*, you fool!" Morris exclaimed angrily.

"Why should a millionaire concern like Mandelberger Brothers & Company got to fail? You talk like a lunatic."

Once more Abe seized his hat.

"I got enough of your nonsense, Mawruss," he said, starting for the elevator.

"Wait!" Morris cried, grabbing him by the arm. "Did you ship any goods to Felix Geigermann yet?"

"Felix Geigermann?" Abe repeated. "Is that the feller?"

Morris nodded, and this time Abe hung up his hat and sat down heavily in the nearest chair.

"Who says he's going to fail?" he asked.

"Everybody says so," Morris replied; "even in the papers they got it."

He handed Kleiman's paper to Abe and indicated the paragraph with a shaking forefinger.

"Where does it say he is going to fail?" Abe asked after he had read it over hastily.

"Where does it say it?" Morris cried. "Why, if a feller goes to work and pays three thousand dollars for a fiddle, Abe, while he only got a business rated twenty-five to thirty thousand, credit fair, ain't it as plain as the nose on your face he must got to fail?"

Once more Abe read over the paragraph and then the paper fell from his hands to the floor.

"Why, Mawruss," he gasped, "it says here he is paying three thousand dollars for an Amati which

he had in his possession for some time. That must be the very fiddle which he is playing on with Moe Rabiner."

"My *tzuris* if it is *oder* it ain't," Morris commented. "What difference does that make to us, Abe?"

Abe's face was white and large beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead as he replied.

"The difference ain't much, Mawruss," he said slowly. "Only if Felix Geigermann pays three thousand for the fiddle which he already got it and we are giving him for nothing another fiddle, which is the selfsame, identical article, Mawruss, then we are out three thousand dollars — and that's all the difference it makes to us!"

For two minutes Morris regarded his partner with a glassy stare.

"Do you mean to told me, Abe, that that there fiddle which you bought it from Shellak is the same identical article like Geigermann pays three thousand dollars for?"

Abe nodded.

"You couldn't tell the difference between 'em, Mawruss," he declared. "Even inside the label is the same — the same name and everything."

Morris took off his hat and coat methodically and hung them up on the rack.

"So, Abe," he commenced, "you are giving to a *Schnorrer* like Geigermann a genu-ine who's-this violin, which it is worth three thousand dollars!"

"How should I know it is worth three thousand?" Abe said.

"Everybody knows that one of them genu-ine feller's violins is worth three thousand dollars," Morris thundered. "I'm surprised to hear you, you should talk that way."

"Shellak didn't know it for one," Abe interrupted, "otherwise why should he sell to us for a hundred and twenty-five dollars a fiddle worth three thousand dollars?"

"What should a greenhorn like Shellak know about such things?" Morris said.

"Don't you fool yourself, Mawruss. If Shellak finds out he is getting a hundred and twenty-five for a fiddle worth three thousand, he's got gumption enough to sue us in the courts yet, and don't you forget it."

"Why should he sue us, Abe?" Morris asked. "A bargain is a bargain, ain't it?"

"Sure I know, Mawruss; but I told the feller the fiddle wasn't genu-ine, y'understand, when all the time I knew it was genu-ine."

"Might you are mistaken maybe, Abe," Morris broke in. "Might the fiddle ain't genu-ine."

"What d'ye mean, ain't genu-ine? I am telling you the label was inside and even the lot number is the same."

"The lot number?"

"Sure, the lot number. Sixteen-seventy, I think

it was; and the only thing for us to do, Mawruss, is we should fix up some scheme to get that fiddle back from Geigermann; and that's all there is to it."

"Well, go ahead, Abe," Morris said. "Go ahead and see him this afternoon."

For the third time Abe put on his hat.

"First and foremost I would go out and get a bite to eat, Mawruss," he said. "What good would it do me to get the fiddle back if I would die from starvation first?"

Although the manufacturers of mechanical piano-players had never solicited Felix Geigermann's photograph for half-tone reproductions in the advertising section of anybody's magazine, he dressed as though he expected the immediate arrival of the man with the camera — that is to say, he wore his hair after Mahler, while Hollman and Moritz Rosenthal contributed to the pattern of his moustache. Moreover, he assumed a Paderewski tuft, a rolling collar that exposed the points of his right and left clavicles, a Windsor tie, and, to preserve the unity of his characterization, a slight nondescript foreign accent, despite the circumstance that he was born in Newark, N. J. All this, however, was not an idle pose on Felix's part. He merely applied to a dry-goods store the business principles of the successful virtuoso, and he had found them so efficacious that personally he sold

more garments than any six of his clerks. He was no less astute in the buying end of the business; for in pitting Sammet Brothers, Klinger & Klein, and Potash & Perlmutter against one another he not only secured better terms of credit, but he found that it materially added to the quality of their garments.

Thus, had Abe but known it, his seven-hundred-and-fifty-dollar order proceeded not from the gift of the violin, but from the circumstance that the velvet suits had sold like hot cakes; and when he entered the Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street store that afternoon Felix greeted him effusively. He wanted that second order badly, and if cordiality could accelerate its shipment he was willing to try it with Abe.

"Ah, *mon ami*," he cried. "Come inside my office. What good wind blows you here?"

Abe scowled. All this enthusiasm betokened but one thing — the violin was a genuine Amati, after all. He sat down slowly and bit the end off a large cigar.

"The fact is, Felix," he began, "for myself I don't care, y'understand, but you know Mawruss Perlmutter, what a crank that feller is, Felix; and so I am coming up here to ask you something for a question."

"Fire away, Abe; you couldn't feaze me none," Felix replied in the accents of Newark, N. J.

"Well, Felix, it's like this," Abe went on: "If we would be selling goods to J. B. Morgan, y'understand, and Mawruss here he is buying for eight dollars a fur overcoat — understand me — he right away would want another statement."

Felix nodded. "Nowadays you can't be too cautious," he agreed.

"So, this morning, in the paper," Abe continued, "Mawruss reads you are buying for three thousand dollars a fiddle and ——"

"But, Abe," Felix interrupted, "it was a genuine Amati."

"Sure, I know," Abe said; "but yesterday I myself am bringing you a genu-ine Amati and I didn't pay no such figure for it."

Felix looked carefully at Abe's stolid face for some gleam of humour; and then he broke into a fit of laughter so violent that Abe suspected it to be a trifle forced.

"All right, Felix," he grumbled; "maybe you think it is a joke, but just the same I am telling you I paid for that fiddle only two hundred dollars."

Felix stopped laughing and wiped his eyes.

"Well, I'm sorry, Abe," he said seriously. "A feller should never look a gift horse in the teeth, Abe; but that fiddle ain't worth a cent more than a hundred at the outside."

"Do you mean to say it ain't a genu-ine Amati?" Abe asked angrily.

"Why, I don't mean to say anything, Abe," Felix began; "but there are Amatis and Amatis. Some of them are worth little fortunes and others are very ordinary-like."

"Say, lookyhere, Felix," Abe cried, "don't fool with me. Either that fiddle is or it ain't a genu-ine Amati. Ain't it?"

Felix paused. He wanted those velvet suits badly, and it began to look as though there would be a delay in the shipment.

"What is all this leading to, Abe?" he began pleasantly. "If there's anything troubling you speak right up and I'll try to straighten it out."

Abe shifted his cigar in his mouth and made the plunge.

"What is the use beating bushes around, Felix?" he said. "Yesterday I am giving you a fiddle, ain't it? Inside it says the fiddle is a genu-ine Amati. What? *Schon gut* if that fiddle is a genuine Amati it is worth three thousand dollars, ain't it? Because if it ain't, then you are stuck with the other fiddle which you bought it. And if it is worth three thousand, then we are stuck by giving you the fiddle, ain't it? So that's the way it goes."

Felix nodded. It was a delicate situation, in which his credit and the shipment of the suits seemed to be imperilled. To declare flatly that Abe's gift was a bogus Amati might offend him seriously, while to admit that it was genuine, but only worth

one hundred dollars, was to foster Abe's notion that he, Felix, had wasted three thousand dollars on a similar violin.

"I want to tell you something, Abe," he began at last. "There's nothing to this business of selling goods by making presents, and I for one don't believe in it. So I'll tell you what I'll do. Come up here to the store to-morrow morning, and I'll get the fiddle from my house and give it back to you."

Abe's scowl merged immediately into a wide grin.

"I don't want the fiddle back, Felix," he said, "but my partner, y'understand, he is the one which is always ——"

"Say no more, Abe," Felix cried. "All I want is you should ship that order; and tell your partner, if he is scared I am spending my money foolishly, he can have a new statement whenever he wants it; and I'll swear to it on a truckload of Bibles."

When Abe returned to his place of business that afternoon he expected to find Morris pacing up and down the showroom floor, the picture of distracted anxiety. Instead he was humming a cheerful melody as he piled up two-piece velvet suits.

"Well, Abe," he said, "you have went on a fool's errand, ain't it?"

"What d'ye mean, fool's errand?" Abe demanded.

"Why, I mean I knew all along that fiddle of

yours was a fake; and anyhow, Abe, I seen Milton Strauss, of Klipmann, Strauss & Bleimer, and what d'ye suppose he told it me, Abe?"

Abe shrugged angrily.

"If you must got to get it off your chest before I tell you what Geigermann told to me, Mawruss," he said, "go ahead."

"Well, I seen Milton Strauss, Abe," Morris went on calmly, "and he says to me that he knows for a positive fact that Felix Geigermann could have sold that fiddle of his for three thousand five hundred dollars before he even pays for it yet. Strauss says that Felix is all the time buying up old fiddles for a side line, and if he makes a cent at it he makes a couple thousand dollars a year. Furthermore, Abe, he says that if anybody's got a genu-ine who's-this fiddle, he wouldn't let it go for no hundred and twenty-five dollars, and the chances is you are paying a fancy figure for a cheap popular-price line of fiddles."

Abe hung up his hat so violently that he nearly knocked a hole in the crown.

"In the first place, Mawruss," he began, "it was your idee I should go up there and get the fiddle back, and in the second place I am telling you with my own eyes I seen that fiddle and it is the self-same, identical article — name, lot number and everything — which that feller Geigermann refuses thirty-five hundred dollars for."

He scowled at his partner in anticipation of a cutting rejoinder.

"But anyhow, that ain't neither here nor there," he continued as Morris remained silent. "We would quick find out for ourselves what the fiddle really is, because to-morrow morning I am going around to the store and Geigermann gives me the fiddle back."

Morris paused in the folding of a velvet skirt.

"I wouldn't do that, Abe, if I was you," he said. "What is the use giving presents and taking 'em back again? You could make from a feller an enemy for life that way."

"Sure, I know Mawruss. An enemy for life is one thing, Mawruss, but thirty-five hundred dollars ain't to be sniffed at neither, y'understand."

"*Schmooes*, Abe!" Morris cired. "The fiddle ain't worth even thirty-five hundred pins."

Following this observation there ensued a controversy of over an hour's duration, at the end of which Morris compromised.

"Say, listen here to me, Abe!" he declared. "You say the fiddle is worth it and I say it ain't. Now if I am right and we take the fiddle back, then we are acting like a couple of cheap yokels, ain't it? *Aber* if you are right, Abe, then we are out thirty-five hundred dollars. So what's the use talking, Abe? Only one thing we got to do. We got to find a feller which he could right away tell whether

the fiddle is *oder* not is genu-ine — just by looking at it, y'understand. This feller we got to send up to Geigermann's house to look at the fiddle to-night yet, and if he says the fiddle is, Abe, then we would take it back. *Aber* if he says the fiddle ain't, Abe, then, Geigermann could keep the fiddle *und fertig*."

Abe nodded slowly.

"The idee is all right, Mawruss," he said; "but in the first place, Mawruss, where could we find such a feller, and in the second place, if we did found him, Mawruss, what excuse would we give Geigermann for sending him up there in the third place?"

Morris scratched his head.

"Well, for that matter, Abe, if we found such a feller, we could send him up there to say that he hears from you that you are giving away such a Who's-this fiddle to Geigermann, and that the feller would like to buy it off of him."

"And then, Mawruss?" Abe asked.

"And then," Morris went on, "Geigermann shows the feller the fiddle, y'understand, and if it is worth it *oder* it isn't worth it the feller says nothing to Geigermann, but he comes back and reports to us."

Abe nodded again.

"If I was to tell you all the weak points of that scheme, Mawruss," he said, "I could stand here talking till my tongue dropped out yet. But all

I got to say is, Mawruss, the idee is yours, and you should go ahead and carry it out. Me, I got nothing to say about it either one way or the other."

At seven that evening, while Professor Ladislaw Wcelak was washing down a late breakfast with a bottle of beer, there came a violent knocking at the hall door. The professor answered it in person, for Aaron was busily engaged over Concone's vocalizations in the front parlour and the other members of the family were washing dishes in the rear.

"*Nu, Landsmann!*" Ladislaw cried. "Ain't you working to-night?"

The newcomer was none other than Emil Pilz, *Konzertmeister* of the Palace Theatre of Varieties, if that dignified term may be applied to the first violin of an orchestra of twenty.

"I am and I ain't," Emil replied. "I've got a job, Louis, which it would take me till nine o'clock, so be a good feller and substitute for me at the theayters till I am coming back."

"And who would substitute for me, Emil?" the professor asked.

"That's all right," Emil replied. "I stopped in on my way over and I seen old man Hubai. He ain't *shikker* yet, so I told him he should go over and fiddle a couple *czardas* till you come, and to tell the boss you got a *Magenweh* and would be a little late.

Me, I am going uptown to look at a fiddle. I got the job through an old pupil, Milton Strauss, which he says a feller by the name Potash gives away a fiddle which he bought, and now he thinks it's a genuine Amati. So I should please go up and look at it; and if it is *oder* it isn't, I get ten dollars."

"Who's this feller Potash?" the professor asked, and Emil shrugged.

"What difference does that make?" he said. "He gives a hundred and twenty-five dollars for the fiddle only a couple days ago. What d'ye want to know for?"

"Oh, nothing," the professor replied; "only my brother Aaron sold to a feller by the name Potash the other day a fiddle which I myself bought from old Hubai a couple years ago for fifteen dollars yet; and if that's the one you are talking about, Emil, you should quick go up to the theayter and forget about it. Because, Emil, if that fiddle is an Amati, you are a Kubelik and I am a Kreisler."

"Sure, I know, Louis," Emil agreed; "but just the same I got to go up there to make the ten, so if you would do me the favour and *spiel* for me till half-past nine you could get anyhow three dollars of it."

"I am willing," the professor said; and ten minutes later he was on his way up to the Palace Theatre of Varieties.

It was precisely half-past nine, while a tabloid

drama in progress on the stage rendered the presence of the orchestra unnecessary, that Emil Pilz returned.

"*Nu* Emil," Louis said as they stood in the corridor leading to the stage entrance, "did you seen the Amati?"

He grinned in humorous anticipation of Emil's answer.

"Yes, I did seen it," Emil replied, "and it's a very elegant, grand model."

"Sure," the professor said; "made in Bavaria with an ax."

"Don't you fool yourself, Louis," Emil retorted. "That's an elegant instrument from Nicolo Amati's best period. If it's worth a cent it's worth three thousand dollars."

"*Schmooes*, Emil!" Louis cried. "What are you trying to do? — kid me?"

"What d'ye mean, kid you?" Emil asked. "I should never stir from this spot, Louis, if that ain't an Amati. It's got a tone like gold, Louis."

For a brief interval Louis stared at his informant.

"Do you mean to told me, Emil, that that fiddle is a real, genu-ine Amati?"

"Listen here to me, Louis," Emil declared; "if I wouldn't be sure that it was genu-ine why should I got such a heart that I would act that way to that feller Potash? When — so sure as you are standing there, Louis — when I told him it was a genu-ine

Amati he pretty near got a fit already; and as for his partner by the name Perlmutter, he hollered so I thought he was going to spit blood already."

Louis licked his dry lips before making any reply.

"So, then, I am paying fifteen dollars for a fiddle which it is a genu-ine Amati," he said, "and that brother of mine which he ain't got no more sense as a lunatic lets it go for a song already."

"Well, I couldn't stop to talk to you now, Louis," Emil said. "I must got to get on the job. I am going to be to-morrow morning, ten o'clock, at this here Potash & Perlmutter's, and if you want to you could meet me there with old man Hubai."

"Old man Hubai!" Louis cried. "What's he got to do with it?"

"He's got a whole lot to do with it, Louis," Emil said. "A feller like him sells you a three-thousand-dollar violin for fifteen dollars which he ain't got a penny in the world, y'understand, and I should stand by and see him get done!"

Professor Wcelak hung his head and blushed.

"Also, Louis," Emil concluded, "I just rung him up at the café, and he says whatever he gets out of it I get half."

When Morris Perlmutter arrived at Felix Geigermann's store the next morning he showed the effects of a restless night and no breakfast; for he had found

it impossible either to eat or sleep until he had his hands on the violin.

"Mr. Geigermann went out for a minute, Mr. Potash," a floorwalker explained; "but he said I should show you right into his office, Mr. Potash."

"My name ain't Potash," Morris replied, "that's my partner, which he couldn't get up here on account he is sick."

"That's all right," the floorwalker said reassuringly. "Just step this way."

He conducted Morris to Geigermann's office.

"Have a seat, Mr. Perlmutter," he said; but the words fell on deaf ears, for as soon as he entered the room Morris descried the violin, which rested on top of Geigermann's desk. He pounced on it immediately, and turning it over in his hand he examined it with the minutest care. At length he discerned the label inside the "eff" hole. It was curling away from the wood and appeared to be ready to drop off, so that it was an easy matter for Morris to impale it on his scarfpin. By dint of a little scraping he managed to draw one edge of it through the "eff" hole and the next moment he was examining the faded printing. Then he turned the label over and in one corner he discovered an oval mark. Simultaneously the door opened and Geigermann entered.

Morris thrust the label into his pocket and turned to Geigermann with an amiable smile.

Moreover, his pallor had given place to a pronounced flush and he looked nearly five years younger than when he walked into the store just ten minutes before.

"Hello, Felix!" he cried, holding out his hand. "How's the boy?"

"Fine," Felix said. "Where's Abe?"

"He couldn't get here on account he is sitting up late again last night, and, of course, Felix, he is sick. But anyhow, Felix, I am glad he ain't coming."

"Why so?" Felix asked.

"Because you never seen such a feller in your life, Felix," Morris went on. "Always worrying and always kicking. First he gives you a fiddle, then he wants to take it back again. With me it is different. What do I care if the fiddle is or it ain't one of them genu-ine Who's This's? Once you give a thing you give a thing, ain't it? And I don't care what experts says nor nothing."

Felix Geigermann blushed. When Emil Pilz had called on him the night before he had scented the object of the visit and had exhibited not Abe's gift but the Karanyi Amati. He had no doubt that Pilz communicated to Potash & Perlmutter the result of his call immediately after its conclusion, and he felt touched and humbled by Morris's generous behaviour.

"Morris," he said, "I did you a big injury. I didn't think you felt that way about it; so when

that expert called on me last night I didn't show him Abe's fiddle at all — I showed him the other one, the three-thousand-dollar fiddle."

Morris's grin became a trifle broader.

"That don't worry me none, Felix," he declared. "I am glad you should keep the fiddle if it should be worth ten thousand dollars even. A gift is a gift, Felix."

"That's very generous of you, Morris, I must say," Felix replied, "and I would keep the violin. I would even do more, Morris. I was going to give Klinger & Klein an order for some of their three-piece broadcloths, but I changed my mind. I will give it to you instead; and if you would be in this afternoon, Morris, I will go downtown and pick 'em out."

Once more Morris wrung his customer's hand. Before proceeding downtown, he sought the nearest dairy restaurant and made tremendous inroads upon its stock of eggs and coffee. It was almost ten o'clock before he reached his place of business, and as he stepped out of the elevator he was greeted by a roar of voices approximating the effect of a well-managed mob scene in a capital-and-labour drama.

Old man Hubai stood in the middle of the showroom; and with clenched fists waving in the air he appealed to heaven to witness that he was a poor man and spoke nothing but the Hungarian tongue.

Hence he was at the mercy of such ruffians as Pilz and Wcelak, whose right name he averred to be Kohn. Following this he swore by his mother that he had paid a thousand kronen for the violin, and *da capo* from the exposition of his poverty. Simultaneously Professor Ladislaw Wcelak dwelt on the economic aspect of the matter. In stentorian tones he declared Abe's purchase of the violin to be another example of capital sitting upon the neck of labour, and he prophesied the rapid approach of the Social Revolution, with sundry references to bloodsuckers, cut-throats and Philistines.

Emil Pilz, Aaron, and Abe Potash himself added to the general din in a three-cornered discussion of the legal points involved. Emil contended that Aaron could replevin the violin upon the ground of Abe's misrepresentation at the time of the purchase, and Abe denied it in Yiddish and English, with emphatic profanity in both languages.

Into this mêlée Morris hurled himself with a resounding "*Koosh!*"

"Are you all crazy, *oder* what?" he demanded.

"Well," Abe cried, "where is it?"

Instantly there was a dead silence and all eyes rested on Morris.

"Where's what?" Morris asked.

"The Amati!" Emil Pilz cried; and Morris laughed aloud.

"*Geh weg!*" he said. "You are an expert!"

Pilz shook his head in a bullying fashion.

"Never mind if I am an expert *oder* not," he said. "Where is that Amati which I seen it myself at Geigermann's house only last night?"

"It is at Geigermann's house to-day," Morris replied. "Right now it is there and it would stay there too, young feller, because that fiddle which you seen it is the one Geigermann paid three thousand dollars for. You seen the wrong fiddle, that's all."

This statement seemed to rouse Aaron Shellak to hysterical frenzy.

"Liar and thief!" he screamed. "Give me my fiddle."

"One moment, Shellak," Morris said, "before you put on your hat and coat and go home, which you shouldn't trouble yourself to come back at all. I want to show you something."

He explored his waistcoat pocket.

"Ain't this the label which was in your fiddle?" he asked, handing Aaron a slip of paper.

Aaron examined it carefully and nodded.

"That other crazy Indian over there," Morris continued, pointing to the professor, "look at this label. Ain't it the same which was in the fiddle?"

Ladislaw Wcelak examined the printed slip and he, too, nodded.

Next, Morris turned to old man Hubai, who stood apart muttering to himself.

"Some one ask that old greenhorn if it's the same label that was in the fiddle. I don't know what he's got to do with this business but he may know, anyhow."

Wcelak interpreted Morris's words and showed the label to the old man, who replied volubly in Hungarian.

"He says he thinks it it," the professor said, "but he doesn't know for sure."

"Well, I know it is the same," Morris retorted, "because I took it out there myself this morning."

Here Morris cleared his throat and assumed an air of such dignity, not to say majesty, that to Abe, it seemed as though he had never rightly known his partner until that moment.

"Now look on the other side of that label," Morris cried.

Once more the label went the rounds and after Emil Pilz had examined it he put on his hat and made for the elevator. Almost on tiptoe Professor Ladislaw Wcelak followed him, while Aaron repaired to the cutting room and packed up his belongings, preparatory to forsaking a career as cutter for one of music.

At length only old man Hubai remained.

"What are you waiting for?" Morris demanded.

"Me poor man," Hubai said. "Me no got carfare, me no got *Trinkgeld*, me no got nothing."

Morris handed him a quarter and he shuffled off

toward the backstairs. Meantime Abe staggered to his feet and passed his hand over his forehead.

"Tell me, Mawruss," he said, "what is all this about?"

"It's just what I says just now, Abe," Morris exploded. "That expert seen the wrong fiddle. The fiddle you gave Geigermann is no more three hundred years old than I am."

"Why ain't it?" Abe asked.

For answer Morris handed him the label. On the obverse side Abe read the inscription:

Nicolaus Amati Cremonensis Faciebai Anno 1670.

"Now turn it over," Morris said; and Abe described on the reverse side a familiar oval mark bearing the following inscription:

Allied Printers Trades Council, Union Label, New York City.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BROTHERS ALL

"WHAT is the use talking, Mawruss?" Abe Potash protested. "The feller couldn't even talk ten words English at all."

"Sure, I know," Morris Perlmutter admitted; "but he would quick learn."

"Quick learn!" Abe exclaimed. "What d'ye mean, quick learn? Nowadays I never seen the like! A greenhorn comes over here from Russland which he is such an iggeramus he don't know his own name, understand me; and he expects right away to get a job in a cloak-and-suit concern uptown, where they would learn him how he should talk English and at the same time pay him ten dollars a week. Actually, Mawruss, them fellers thinks they are doing you a favour if they ruin ten garments a day on you in exchange for learning 'em English. Me, when I come over from Russland, I was *oser* so *grossartig*. I was glad to got a job learning on shirts in a subcellar and the boss boards me for wages. I got an elegant bill of fare, too, I bet yer, Mawruss. Every day for dinner is salt herring and potatoes, except

Sundays is onions extra. And did that feller learn me English, Mawruss? *Oser a stück.* I must got to go to night school to learn English, Mawruss, and I did, Mawruss — and they learned me good there, Mawruss; and so this here feller you are talking about should do the same."

"We wouldn't got to learn him English, Abe," Morris declared. "The feller is a bright, smart feller, and he could pick it up quick enough."

"Sure, I know," Abe rejoined; "and pick up a whole lot of other things, too, Mawruss. Silks and velvets and buttons them fellers picks up."

"Not this feller, Abe," Morris said. "He is from decent, respectable people in the old country. He is studying for a doctor already when he comes over here, but he gets into trouble on account he belongs to a politics society over there; so he must got to run away. The feller is a bright feller, Abe."

"I know them bright fellers, Mawruss — sit up till all hours of the night in Canal Street coffee houses killing off grand dukes. Grand dukes is got to make a living the same like anybody else, Mawruss; and anyhow, Mawruss, when a feller comes over here from Russland, Mawruss, he ain't got no business bothering his head about grand dukes. The way things is nowadays in the cloak-and-suit trade, Mawruss, a feller's got all he could attend to holding on to his job."

Morris shrugged.

"Let's give the feller a show anyhow, Abe," he rejoined; "and if he don't soon make good we could quick fire him, y'understand."

"That's what you said about that feller Harkavy, which we give him a job in our cutting room, Mawruss. All the time he works for us he acts so *dumm* like a ten-year-old child; and so soon as we fire him, Mawruss, he goes to work by Kleiman & Elenbogen and turns out a couple of styles, which the least them highwaymen makes out of 'em is five thousand dollars."

"How shou.d I know what Harkavy could do with Kleiman & Elenbogen, Abe?" Morris cried. "You are the prophet of this here concern, Abe. Always you are predicting to me to-morrow what is going to happen yesterday."

"Well, what's *vorbei* is *vorbei*, Mawruss," Abe retorted; "and if I would got to stand here all day and *schmooes* with you, Mawruss, go ahead and hire the feller. Only one thing I am saying to you, Mawruss: Don't tell me afterward that I was in favour of the feller from the start; because I ain't."

With this ultimatum, Abe glanced toward the cutting room, where sat a tall, stooping figure, holding in his two hands a peaked cap.

"Only to look at the feller gives me a *krank*, Mawruss," Abe continued; "so, if you are going to hire him, Mawruss, do me the favour and give him a

couple dollars out of the safe so he should get a shave and a haircut and a new hat."

Morris nodded and started for the cutting room, when Abe called him back.

"For my part, Mawruss, I don't care what people says, y'understand," he declared; "but if we got a couple of them Thirty-fourth Street buyers around here and they sees our workpeople is got such shoes which their toes is sticking out already, Mawruss, what do they think of us? Am I right or wrong?"

"Sure, I know," Morris said; "but ——"

"But nothing, Mawruss," Abe concluded. "For three dollars we should make suckers out of ourselves! Don't stand there like a fool, Mawruss. Give the feller five dollars; he should buy himself a pair of shoes and *fertig*."

The transformation begun in Cesar Kovalenko by a haircut and a shave was made complete when Morris, accompanied by Kovalenko's cousin, went with him to a retail clothing establishment. There Cesar discarded forever his cap, top boots and frogged overcoat and emerged—but for his vocabulary—a naturalized citizen of the cloak-and-suit trade.

"Now all he's got to do," Morris said, "is to work hard and he would quick be making good wages."

"Sure, sure!" the cousin replied. "At first, maybe he would be a little *dumm* on account he is got a whole lot of experiences lately."

"Experiences?" Morris asked. "What for experiences?"

"Well, in the first place," the cousin proceeded, "two years ago he is studying for a doctor in the University of Harkav, and next door to him one house by the other lives a feller which I ain't got nothing to say against him, y'understand, only he goes to work and sends a package to the chief of police, Mr. Perlmutter, which when they open the package, y'understand, inside is something g'fixed. Mind you, Mr. Perlmutter, I wouldn't say nothing if it would be really the chief of police which would open the package, but always it is some poor *Schnorrer* which the chief of police calls in from the street. This time it was a feller by the name Levin, a decent, respectable, young feller — his father was a *Rav*. The old man is coming over here this week, I understand, Mr. Perlmutter — but when the chief of police sends out Levin in the backyard he should open the package, understand me, that's the last any one sees either from the package or either from Levin."

Morris clicked his tongue sympathetically.

"And what did they done to the feller which sends the package?" he asked.

"Him, they didn't done nothing, Mr. Perlmutter," the cousin replied; "but Cesar, here, they put it all on to him. First they are making him arrested, and the police pretty near kill him and the Cossacks

take him from Harkav to Odessa he should get tried, and then they pretty near kill him there; and if it wouldn't be that we are sending over to give to a judge there a couple thousand rubles they would right away shoot him. Anyhow, Mr. Perlmutter, one year my cousin sits in prison there; and then we are sending over a couple thousand rubles more which we give the feller what runs the prison, and so my cousin sneaks out of there and he comes over here to this country."

Morris gazed at the neatly clad figure who walked quietly along beside him.

"You wouldn't think it to look at him," he said; "but, anyhow, I would do my best to see he gets a good show; and he would quick learn, I bet yer."

By this time they had reached Potash & Perlmutter's premises and the cousin shook hands warmly with Morris.

"You got a good heart, Mr. Perlmutter," he declared fervently; "and you wouldn't lose money supposing you did pay him eight dollars a week to start."

Morris paused before passing indoors.

"Listen here to me," he said. "Maybe I got a good heart and maybe I ain't, but your cousin starts on five dollars a week, understand me; and if he gets six dollars inside of a month he would got to earn it."

Despite this assertion, however, it was barely

three weeks before Cesar Kovalenko was earning and receiving eight dollars a week, for never in their business experience had Abe and Morris employed a more intelligent workman. Not only did he exhibit great promise as an assistant cutter but he had acquired a knowledge of English sufficient for his needs.

"If the feller keeps on, Abe," Morris said, "we would soon got to give him another raise. He's a wonder!"

Abe nodded gloomily.

"You could get all the wonders you want, Mawruss, to learn cutting at eight dollars a week," he said; "and supposing he does pick up English quick, Mawruss — a feller could be a regular Henry Shakespeare, y'understand, and he wouldn't be any better as a garment cutter on that account. Am I right or wrong?"

"Well, certainly it don't do no harm that Kovalenko understands a little English," Morris commented.

"Sure not," Abe agreed satirically, "because the quicker he learns English, Mawruss, the quicker he would copy our styles and find a job with a competitor. Take this here Harkavy, for instance. Only this morning I seen Felix Geigermann in the subway and he says that Kleiman & Elenbogen is showing, at a dollar less on the garment, a ringer for our Style 4022 which we sold him, Mawruss. Now,

who tells them suckers how they could cut down on the buttons and the lining, Mawruss, and put one pleat less in the skirt, Mawruss? I suppose you did or I did, Mawruss — ain't it?"

He paused for a reply, but none came.

"And yet, Mawruss," he concluded, "that feller Harkavy was a wonder too; and I suppose, Mawruss, the way he picked up English would be a big consolation to us, Mawruss, if a good customer like Geigermann leaves us and goes over to Kleiman & Elenbogen."

Morris grunted scornfully.

"You are all the time looking for trouble, Abe," he said. "If we would lose as many customers as you are talking about, Abe, we wouldn't got a decent concern left on our books at all. You got to give Geigermann credit for knowing a good garment when he sees it."

"Sure, I know, Mawruss," Abe replied. "Geigermann knows a good garment when he sees it, but his customers don't; and if Geigermann could get, for a dollar less than ours, garments which looks like ours and is like ours, all but the buttons and the pleats in the skirt, we could kiss ourselves good-by with the business, no matter how many bright greenhorns we got it in our cutting room."

"*Geh weg!*" Morris exclaimed. "You don't know what you are talking about, Abe."

Nevertheless, when Felix Geigermann, the weil-

known Harlem dry-goods merchant and violin dilettante, entered Potash & Perlmutter's showroom the next morning Morris greeted him with some misgiving.

"Hello, Felix!" he said. "Are you giving us a repeat order so soon already on them 4022's?"

Felix shook his head.

"I got a few words to say to Abe, Mawruss," he replied. "Is he in now?"

Morris smiled amiably, although he was convinced that Felix's visit boded a cancellation of the 4022's.

"He ain't in now," he answered, "but if you wait a few minutes he'll be right back."

He returned hastily to the office, for he knew that if Abe found them in conversation on his return he would impute the cancellation of the order to something Morris had said. Thus Felix was left alone in the showroom, save for Cesar Kovalenko, who plied a feather duster industriously among the sample-racks. As he worked, Cesar whistled a Russian melody, half sad, half cheerful, and Felix paused midway in the lighting of his cigar. It was the opening theme in the second movement of Tschaikovsky's Fourth Symphony; and Cesar's rendition of it was not only true to pitch but he managed to introduce certain nuances that to Felix proclaimed the born musician,

"What's that you are whistling?" he inquired; and Cesar smiled.

"Tschaikovsky's Fourt' Symphony," he replied, and then he reached around to his hip-pocket. "See; I am got music."

He handed a paper-covered miniature score to Geigermann, who opened it at random.

"Ha!" Felix exclaimed as his eye lit on a familiar phrase in the last movement. He hummed it over and Cesar joined him in a clear, musical barytone. They were thus engaged when a tall, broad-shouldered individual entered the showroom.

"Sorry to interrupt you, gentlemen," he said, "but is the boss in?"

"In the office back there," Felix replied.

"Will you tell him Mr. Gunther would like to see him?" the newcomer continued.

"I will if you want me to," Felix said; "but I am here only a customer."

"Excuse me," Mr. Gunther apologized. "I was talking about the other feller. However——"

He proceeded to the office and engaged Morris in earnest conversation for several minutes. They returned to the showroom just as Cesar was replacing the score in his hip-pocket. The motion was too much for Mr. Gunther, whose occupation made him nervous; and he plunged his hand into his overcoat and brought out a shining metallic object. There was a sharp struggle and Cesar Kovalenko leaned against the partition with his wrists encircled by a pair of handcuffs.

"Come along quiet," said Mr. Gunther calmly, "or I'll knock yer block awff."

At this juncture the elevator door banged open and Abe came into the showroom.

"What is the matter here?" he cried.

Mr. Gunther smiled.

"I'm a United States deputy marshal," he proclaimed, "and I'm arresting this guy under a warrant duly issued in the Southern District of New York. I've got a taxicab downstairs and if any of you gentlemen is a friend of the prisoner youse can come along to the marshal's office."

Morris darted into the office and reappeared with his hat and coat.

"Abe," he said, "you stay here in the store. I would go down with him."

Abe frowned.

"One moment, Mawruss," he cried. "It don't go so quick as all that. First, we would find out what he makes this young feller arrested for."

The deputy marshal nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "You're entitled to know it. He's arrested on the complaint of the Russian Consulate for something he did in Russia two years ago."

"In Russia!" Abe exclaimed. "Two years ago! Mawruss, do me a favour. You stay in the store and I would go with him."

Felix Geigermann placed his hand on Abe's arm.

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," he said. "I'll tell you the truth. I am pretty busy to-day and I am coming here to cancel them 4022's; but now I don't care at all. You could ship them goods if you want to, Abe; but one thing I ask you as a favour — let me go with him. I don't care what the other feller says. I am just now talking to this here young feller and if he done anything in Russia, understand me, I would eat it. So you stay here and tend to business and I would go with him."

Morris drew on his overcoat with force sufficient to rip the sleeve-lining. "Nathan, the shipping clerk, could tend the store, Abe," he declared, "and we'll all go with him."

"In the first place, Mawruss," Abe said, after they had returned from the United States Commissioner's office, where Cesar Kovalenko had been arraigned and committed without bail to the Tombs — "in the first place what are we bothering our heads about this young feller? Of course, when I was down there, Mawruss, and see that feller from the Russian counsellor's office, which he is got a face, Mawruss, hard like iron, y'understand, I didn't say nothing; but the way you are going to work and telephoning to Henry D. Feldman and everything, Mawruss — before we would get through with him it would cost us anyhow a couple hundred dollars."

"Geigermann says he would go half," Morris said.

"Sure, I know, Mawruss; but just because Geigermann acts like a sucker, Mawruss, why should we get ourselves into it too? Furthermore, Mawruss, how do we know Geigermann would go half? He's that kind of feller, Mawruss, that when he says something he don't take it so particular he should stick to it, Mawruss. One day he gives us an order and the next day cancels it, Mawruss — and that's the kind of a man he is."

"He didn't cancel it, Abe," Morris cried. "He was going to cancel it, but he changed his mind."

"Sure, he changed his mind," Abe interrupted; "and what is going to hinder him changing his mind on this other proposition, Mawruss? You could take it from me, Mawruss, when the time comes he should pay up, understand me, it'll be a case of *nix wissen* — and don't you forget it."

Morris shrugged impatiently.

"*Nu*, Abe," he said; "what could we do? Once in a while we couldn't help ourselves, y'understand. Should we let this poor greenhorn be sent back to Russland, which he ain't got a relative in the world, understand me, except his cousin, which he is just as poor as Kovalenko?"

"That's all right, Mawruss," Abe declared. "I ain't kicking we shouldn't help the feller. All I am saying is there's lots of our people which they got more dollars as we got dimes. Take Moses M.

Steuermann, for instance; there's a feller which he is such a big charity feller, understand me, why shouldn't he help Kovalenko?"

"Well, in the first place, no one tells him about it, Abe," Morris said, "and in the second place ——"

"But why don't we tell him about it, Mawruss?" Abe interrupted. "Why don't you go down to see him, Mawruss, and tell him all about it?"

"Me go down to see him, Abe!" Morris cried. "Why, the feller is a multimillionaire. With such people like that I couldn't open my mouth at all. Why don't you go down to see him?"

"Why should I go down?" Abe asked. "You are the lodge brother here, Mawruss — ain't it? You are the one which you are always sitting up till all hours of the night making motions. I couldn't make a motion to save my life, Mawruss, and you know it."

"Sure, I know," Morris protested; "but lodge meetings is something else again. A feller could talk at a lodge meeting — and what is it? A couple young lawyers which they couldn't even pay their laundry bills, y'understand, and a dozen other fellers, insurance brokers *oder* cigar dealers, and most of 'em old-timers at that — why should I be afraid to say a little something to 'em? But with a feller like Moses M. Steuermann, which his folks was bankers in Frankfort-on-the-Main when Carnegie and Vanderbilt and all them other *goyim* was new

beginners yet, Abe — that's a different proposition entirely."

Abe nodded and remained silent for a few minutes.

"Might Felix Geigermann would go down and see him, Mawruss," he suggested finally. "It wouldn't do no harm we should ring him up anyhow."

"Go as far as you like, Abe," Morris said, and Abe started immediately for the telephone.

"I spoke to Felix, Mawruss," he announced a few minutes later, "and Felix said he would go right down and see him. He ain't so stuck on paying Feldman a couple hundred dollars neither."

Morris snorted indignantly.

"If you was going to be charitable, Abe," he said, "why don't you be a sport? We could easy stand a couple hundred dollars."

"That's all right, Mawruss," Abe declared. "Business is business and charity is charity, y'understand; but even in charity, Mawruss, it don't do no harm to keep the expenses down."

Two hours afterward Felix Geigermann entered the showroom, his face glistening with perspiration.

"Well, boys," he almost shouted, "I seen him, and he says he would call in here on his way uptown."

"Who would call in?" Morris asked.

"Moses M. Steuermann," Felix replied. "It was the Tschaikovsky Fourth that fixed him, Mawruss. I told him that young feller carries round with him an orchestral score, and right away he says he would

come up. For years I seen Mr. Steuermann at the Philharmonics and the Boston Symphonies, Mawruss, and I didn't know who he was at all. I always thought he was something to do with a music-publishing concern."

"Steuermann got something to do with a music-publishing concern!" Morris exclaimed. "I'm surprised to hear you, you should talk that way, Felix."

"Well, when you are seeing year in and year out a feller goes to every concert what is, Abe," Felix explained, "naturally you get an idee he is in the music business — ain't it?"

"That's what you think, Felix," Abe said, taking up the cudgels in defence of Steuermann; "but you could take it from me, Felix, if a feller like Steuermann seemingly fools away his time at concerts, understand me, he ain't doing it for nothing. He probably gets some business out of it the same like a lot of fellers you would think is making suckers of themselves going to lodge meetings, Felix. Most of 'em sells many a big bill of goods that way."

"That ain't here nor there, Abe," Felix rejoined. "The point is, Steuermann would be up here at five o'clock; so, what are you going to tell him when he calls?"

"Me tell him!" Abe cried. "Why, I wouldn't be here at all. I got to—now—see—a—now—customer at the Prince Clarence."

"You ain't got to do nothing of the kind, Abe," Morris retorted angrily. "You are going to stay right here and talk to that feller when he comes. What do you think — I am going to be the goat every time?"

"What's the matter, Abe?" Felix asked. "Are you afraid of the feller? He couldn't eat you up, Abe."

"What d'ye mean, afraid of him?" Abe exclaimed. "I am seeing big merchants every day, Felix, and I could talk right up to them too. But this here is my partner's affair. He hired Kovalenko in the first place; and ——"

"What's the use talking, Abe?" Morris interrupted. "If you go home I go home; so you got to stay and we would both see the feller. What is the difference, supposing the feller does got a couple million dollars?"

"A couple million dollars!" Felix said. "Why, I bet yer, if the feller's got a cent he is worth twenty million dollars."

Abe drew pale.

"Say, lookyhere, why should I talk to Mr. Steuermann?" he besought. "You could do this without me, Mawruss."

"Don't be a baby, Abe," Morris retorted. "Felix would stay here with us and ——"

"Not me, boys," Felix said. "I guess you got to excuse me. I done enough already and if I don't

get right home and change my underclothes, which they are dripping wet with perspiration, I would sure catch a bad cold."

He shook Abe and Morris warmly by the hand; and hardly had the elevator door closed behind him when the showroom became a scene of nervous activity.

"Nathan," Abe yelled to the shipping clerk, "fetch the broom. The place looks like a pigsty here!"

He turned to Morris with excited gesture.

"Do me the favour, Mawruss," he said; "tell a couple of them young fellers from the cutting room to come in here. Them sample-racks ain't been straightened up for a week. I am going round to the barber shop, Mawruss, and I would be right back."

It lacked one minute of five and Abe and Morris sat at their respective desks in the firm's office, when Miss Cohen, the bookkeeper, knocked timidly at the door.

"A gentleman wants to see you, Mr. Potash," she said. "He wouldn't give his name."

Abe cleared his throat with an effort.

"Tell him he should come right in," he croaked; and a moment later a tall personage, clad in a fur overcoat and wearing a freshly ironed silk hat, appeared in the doorway.

"Is this Mr. Potash?" he asked in rounded, oratorical tones.

Abe nodded. For a moment he was bereft of speech and he jerked his head sideways in the direction of his partner.

"This is Mr. Perlmutter," he said at length — "my partner."

"How do you do, sir?" the visitor replied as he seized Morris's clammy palm in a warm embrace.

"Take a seat," Morris murmured, dragging forth a chair; and the stranger sat down deliberately.

"Well, sir," Abe asked, "what could we do for you?"

"Mr. Potash," the visitor began, "every merchant is at times confronted with a situation which demands a few appropriate remarks."

Abe nodded and mopped tentatively at his dewy forehead.

"But how many are there," the visitor continued, "who can do justice to the occasion? For instance, Mr. Perlmutter, you are asked at a charitable meeting to discuss the question of restricting immigration. I ask you candidly, Mr. Perlmutter, would you feel competent to stand upon your feet and ——"

Suddenly Abe jumped to his feet.

"Excuse me, my dear sir," he cried. "Wouldn't you smoke a cigar?"

Morris was nearest the safe and he, too, leaped from his chair.

"Never mind the safe, Mawruss," Abe said,

"Mr. Potash," the visitor began, "every merchant is at times confronted with a situation which demands a few appropriate remarks"

flapping his right hand excitedly. "I bought some while I was out just now."

He handed a gold-banded, Bismarck-size cigar to the visitor, who nodded a dignified acknowledgment and immediately struck a match.

"Yes, Mr. Perlmutter," he went on, "as I was saying, such a topic as the restriction of immigration would embarrass even an experienced speaker." He paused and cleared his throat impressively. "Now, I have here," he said, exploring the capacious pockets of his overcoat, "a work entitled 'A Quarter of a Century in Congress,' by the Honourable Lucius J. Howell, which, gentlemen, is issued upon subscription only, in half morocco or crushed levant at a hitherto unheard-of price."

Abe ceased mopping his brow and turned a terrible glare upon the book canvasser.

"What!" he roared. "A book agent?"

Once more he jumped to his feet. "Out!" he bellowed. "Out from my office, you dirty loafer!"

The book agent scowled and replaced the bound dummy in his pocket.

"With a high-grade selling proposition like this, Mr. Potash," he said, "you should be careful of your language."

"Mawruss," Abe cried, "what the devil do you mean letting in a feller like this?"

"What d'ye mean, letting him in?" Morris

retorted. "Did I tell Miss Cohen she should show him in?"

"Don't quarrel on my account, gentlemen," the canvasser said as he puffed at his cigar. "I shall call again when you're not so busy."

He passed out of the office with a graceful gesture of farewell, and once more Abe and Morris sat down on the edge of their chairs. It was not for long, however; and this time, without any announcement, a thick-set gentleman with carefully trimmed beard and moustache stood in the doorway.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," he said — and Abe and Morris literally sprang into the middle of the office floor.

"Mr. Steuermann?" Abe gasped, extending his hand.

"My name is Mr. Goldstein," the visitor replied, "and I represent the Lilywhite Dress Shield Company."

He proceeded no further, however, for Morris led him by the shoulder to the elevator shaft and pointed to a notice reading:

HOURS FOR SALESMEN
8 to 9:30

Morris returned to the office and hardly was he seated in his chair when, for the third time, the doorway framed a visitor.

"Mr. Potash?" the newcomer asked timidly. He was a short, slender man, past middle age, clad in

a shabby overcoat, half threadbare, and a soft felt hat of a dingy, weatherbeaten appearance.

"*Nu!*" Abe growled. "What is it now?"

"Mr. Potash," the stranger continued, "I called to see you at the request of Mr. Geigermann. My name is Steuermann." Abe essayed to rise, but his knees would not support him and he waved his hand feebly to a chair that Morris dragged forward.

"Mr. Steuermann," Morris said, "you are coming up here to see us when we could much better afford it if we would go down and see you."

"Why, gentlemen, it was no inconvenience for me," Steuermann replied. "I am on my way home."

"God would bless you for it, anyway!" Abe declared fervently; and Steuermann blushed.

"Now, Mr. Potash," he protested, "I am not here for compliments. I've come to see what we can all do for this poor fellow. I'm a little late, because I was waiting for a report from my lawyers."

"Your lawyers!" Abe exclaimed. "Why, we already hired Henry D. Feldman."

"So I believe," Steuermann replied; "and he has consented to act in conjunction with my lawyers — Chitty, Schwarzstein & Munjoy. I shall relieve you gentlemen of all responsibility in the matter."

"Do you mean by responsibility, Mr. Steuermann, that you would pay Feldman?" Abe asked.

Mr. Steuermann smiled.

"Well, we won't discuss that just now," he said.

"Because," Abe continued, "we wouldn't consent to nothing of the kind, Mr. Steuermann; the young feller works for us and we would got to do our share."

"That part will come later," Steuermann insisted; "and now let's see what is to be done."

For more than half an hour Steuermann disclosed to Abe and Morris the result of his lawyers' investigation.

"Mr. Munjoy has seen Kovalenko," Steuermann said, "and he asserts that, so far as proof is concerned, no murder was ever committed."

"But, Mr. Steuermann," Morris said, "the feller which he opened the package, y'understand, was blown up so his own father couldn't recognize him even."

"That's just the point, Mr. Perlmutter," Steuermann declared; "and Mr. Munjoy says that on this circumstance hinges the Russian Consulate's whole case. They are obliged to prove that a definite person was killed; and it seems that the consulate paid the passage of the victim's father to this country, so that he might testify before the United States Commissioner. I understand that the old man, who by the way is a Rabbi, arrived last week. Mr. Munjoy says that if the father is unable to testify to the identity of the victim it may so

complicate matters that more evidence will be necessary and the consulate may drop the affair on account of the expense involved."

Morris nodded sadly.

"Lawyers could always make expenses, Mr. Steuermann," he said, "for the Russian counsellor and for us also."

"Never mind about expense, Mawruss," Abe interrupted. "What does it matter a few hundred dollars, Mawruss, so long as we get this young feller free? In fact, Mr. Steuermann, I am willing we should go half if we could see this here Rabbi and *schmier* him a thousand dollars he should swear that no one was killed at all."

Mr. Steuermann shook his head. "That would be in effect suborning perjury, Mr. Potash," he said — and Morris glared at Abe.

"I'm surprised at you, you should suggest such a thing, Abe!" he exclaimed. "Seemingly you got no conscience at all. A thousand dollars we should pay the feller! I bet yer he would lie himself black in the face for a twenty-dollar bill."

"It isn't a matter of money, Mr. Perlmutter," Steuermann said; "but why not see the old man tonight? I have his address here, and if you approached him in the right way perhaps he might testify that he did not recognize the murdered man. That would only be the simple truth and it would be just what we want. As it is, I'm afraid the Russian

Consulate will intimidate him into swearing that he knew the body to be that of his son."

He handed Morris a card bearing a Madison Street address.

"Well, gentlemen," he concluded, "I've taken up your time long enough. I hope to see you in my office to-morrow, Mr. Perlmutter."

Morris nodded and was about to shake hands with his visitor when Abe slapped his thigh in a sudden realization of his inhospitality.

"Mr. Steuermann," he exclaimed, "wouldn't you smoke something?"

He jumped to his feet and thrust a huge gold-banded cigar at Mr. Steuermann, who shook his head.

"Thank you very much," Mr. Steuermann said, "but I'm afraid it's rather near dinner-time."

"Put it in your pocket and smoke it after dinner," Abe insisted, and Mr. Steuermann smilingly obliged.

Together the two partners escorted him into the elevator; and when the door closed behind him Morris turned to Abe with an ironical smile.

"You got a whole lot of manners, Abe, I must say," he commented bitterly.

"What d'ye mean, manners?" Abe asked. "What did I done?"

"Tell a millionaire like Mr. Steuermann he should smoke the cigar after dinner!" Morris replied.

"Don't you suppose he's got plenty cigars of his own?"

"Maybe he did got 'em and maybe he didn't," Abe retorted; "but, in the first place, Mawruss, I noticed he took the cigar, y'understand; and, in the second place, Mawruss, them cigars cost thirty-five cents apiece, Mawruss, and there's few millionaires, Mawruss, which is too proud to smoke a thirty-five-cent cigar."

When Morris Perlmutter entered the subway that evening en route for the lower East Side, he was in none too cheerful mood; for, in the excitement attending Steuermann's visit, he had forgotten to telephone Mrs. Perlmutter that he would be late for dinner. Consequently there had been a painful scene upon his arrival home that evening, nor had Mrs. Perlmutter's wrath been appeased when he informed her that he was obliged to go right downtown again.

Indeed, his sympathy for Cesar Kovalenko had well-nigh evaporated as he entered the subway, and he reflected bitterly upon the circumstance that first led him to hire that unfortunate young man. Thus there was something doubly irritating in the coincidence which seated him next to Louis Kleiman in the crowded express train he had boarded, and he had made up his mind to ignore his competitor's presence when Louis caught sight of him.

"So, Perlmutter," Louis commented, without any introductory greeting, "you are trying to do us again!"

Morris turned and stared icily at Kleiman.

"I don't want to talk to you at all, Kleiman," he replied; "and, anyhow, Kleiman, I don't know what you mean — we are trying to do you! The shoe pinches on the other foot, Kleiman, when you just stop to consider you are stealing away from us that feller Harkavy, which all he knows we taught him."

Louis Kleiman emitted a short, raucous guffaw.

"Well, what are you kicking about?" he said. "You stole him back again — ain't it?"

"Stole him back again!" Morris repeated. "What are you talking nonsense, Kleiman? We wouldn't take that feller back in our store, not if we could get him to come to work for two dollars a week."

"Yow!" Kleiman exclaimed skeptically. "I don't suppose you know the feller left us at all?"

"I did not," Morris replied promptly; "and if he did, Kleiman, I couldn't blame him. A feller doesn't want to work all his life for ten dollars a week."

"What d'ye mean, ten dollars a week? We paid Harkavy fifteen and we offered him twenty-five; but the feller wouldn't stay with us at all. For two weeks now he acts uneasy and yesterday he leaves us."

"That's all right, Kleiman," Morris said as the train drew into Ninety-sixth Street. "You could easy steal somebody else from another concern." Kleiman glared at Morris and was about to utter a particularly incisive retort when the train stopped.

"I got to change here," he announced; "but when I see you again, Perlmutter, I would tell you what you are."

"I don't got to tell you what you are, Kleiman," Morris concluded as he opened his evening paper. "You know only too well."

"*Rosher!*" Kleiman hissed as he hurled himself into the mob of passengers that blocked the exit.

Morris nodded sardonically and commenced to read his paper. He desisted immediately, however, when his eye fell upon a cut accompanying Felix Geigermann's display advertisement. It was a beaded marquisette costume, made in obvious imitation of one of Potash & Perlmutter's leaders; and the retail price quoted by Geigermann was precisely one dollar less than Potash & Perlmutter's lowest wholesale figure.

"That's some of Harkavy's work," Morris muttered; and for the remainder of the journey he was once more plunged in the gloomiest cogitation. Almost automatically he alighted at the Brooklyn Bridge and boarded a Madison Street Car; and it was not until the jolting, old-fashioned vehicle had

nearly reached its eastern terminus that he discerned the house number furnished to him by Steuermann. He hurried to the rear platform and jumped to the street, where he collided violently with a short, bearded person.

"Excuse me!" Morris cried; then he recognized his victim. "Harkavy!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"I am coming to say good-by to a friend," Harkavy replied with some show of confusion. "I got to go to Chicago to-morrow."

"Chicago!" Morris repeated. "Why, what are you doing in Chicago, Harkavy?"

"I am — now — going to got a job out there," Harkavy replied — "a very good job."

Morris drew his former assistant cutter to the sidewalk. He had temporarily forgotten the object of his visit to the lower East Side in the sudden conception of an idea, which was no less than the rehiring of Harkavy.

"What for a good job?" Morris asked. "Twenty dollars a week?"

Harkavy nodded.

"A little more," he said — "twenty-five."

"*Schon gut*," Morris declared; "then you wouldn't got to go at all, because we ourselves would give you thirty."

"I moost go," Harkavy said, shaking his head; "my fare is paid."

"Pay 'em back the fare," Morris insisted — "we would see you wouldn't lose it."

Again Harkavy shook his head.

"I got a bonus too," he declared — "a thousand rubles."

"What are you talking about, rubles?" Morris said impatiently. "You ain't a greenhorn no longer. Do you mean a thousand dollars?"

"Six hundred dollars — about," Harkavy replied.

Morris whistled.

"Well," he said after a pause of some seconds, "put off going until to-morrow anyhow. Maybe we could fix up to give you the six hundred dollars anyhow."

Harkavy remained silent and Morris clapped him on the shoulder.

"If people is so anxious to get you that they pay you a big lot of money like that, Harkavy, you could keep 'em waiting anyhow one day. Come round and see us to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, wouldn't you?"

Harkavy pondered the question for some minutes.

"If you wish it, Mr. Perlmutter," he said, "I would do so; but I must got to go away by eleven o'clock sure."

"Good!" Morris exclaimed. "Then I'll see you to-morrow morning at nine o'clock.'

They shook hands on the appointment and Morris turned away and ascended the high stoop of an

old-fashioned tenement. In the vestibule he encountered a boy whose right cheek was apparently distorted by a severe toothache.

"Do a family by the name Levin live here?" Morris asked.

The boy nodded and disgorged a huge lump of toffee, whereat the toothache disappeared.

"Dat's me fader," he said. "Fourt' floor front east. He ain't in, dough."

"Your father!" Morris cried. "Why, the people I am coming to see they are greenhorns."

"Oh, yeh," the youngster replied; "dat's me fader's uncle. He lives wid us."

"All right," Morris said. "Take me up there."

The youngster resumed his swollen cheek and escorted Morris up three flights of slippery brass-bound stairs. Without the formality of knocking, they entered an apartment on the fourth floor where a woman stood washing dishes.

"Mrs. Levin?" Morris said.

The woman nodded.

"I want to see your man's uncle," Morris continued. Without looking up the woman cried in stentorian tones: "Mees-taire!"

In response a bent figure, clad in an alpaca caftan, appeared from an interior bedroom. He wore a velvet skullcap, and a thin gray beard straggled from his chin; his nose was surmounted by a pair of steel spectacles.

"*Sholom alaicham!*" Morris cried, according the Rabbi that greeting, as ancient as the Hebrew tongue itself — "Peace be with you."

"*Alaicham sholom!*" the Rabbi answered, and then he resorted to the Yiddish jargon: "Do you look for me?"

"I look for the *Rav* Elkan Levin," Morris said in a tongue to which he had long been unaccustomed. "I am the servant of the philanthropist Steuermann."

"Steuermann?" the *Rav* Levin repeated. "I do not know him."

"In America," Morris said, "his name is honored over the governor's. He sends me to you to speak for the unfortunate *Tzwee* Kovalenko."

"*Tzwee* Kovalenko," the old man cried, and his beard stood out as his invisible lips tightened, while his nose became sharp and hawk-like. "A *mishna meshuna* to him, the same as he sent to my son."

"No," Morris declared; "he did not send it to your son. It was another that did it."

The old man sank trembling into a nearby chair and clutched the edge of the table.

"You tell this to me who saw with my own eyes his body!" he said in shaking tones. "Yes, *Baron;* I saw my own child like a slaughtered beast, all blood — not a face, but a piece of flesh. I saw him, and you tell me this!"

"None the less," Morris went on, "if your son did die it was a *kapora* not meant for him. It was intended for the chief of police."

The *Rav* shook his head.

"It stands in the *Gemera*," he said, in the sing-song tone of the Talmudical reader: "If one flings a stone for pleasure and it strikes another so that he dies, the one also shall die."

He rose to his feet and waved one hand with a flapping motion. "An eye for an eye!" he cried in shrill tones. "A tooth for a tooth!"

Morris shrank back and turned to the woman, who had not raised her head from the dishwashing.

"You tell him," he said, "that the philanthropist Steuermann invites him to come to the address I shall give you — to-morrow at ten o'clock. Tell him you know that when Steuermann commands, governors obey."

"What is it my business?" Mrs. Levin replied. "Tell him yourself."

"Your man should go with him," Morris insisted. "He and you will not lose by it."

Morris wrote the address on the back of one of Potash & Perlmutter's business cards and handed it to her.

"Put on it the table," she said.

"Tell your man," Morris continued, "if he does take this old man to Steuermann I myself will pay him twenty-five dollars."

Once more he faced the *Rav*, who had sunk again into the chair.

"Will it bring back your son to you if *Tzwee* Kovalenko dies?" he asked.

The old man plucked at his beard.

"He was my son, my only son," he said; "my *Kaddish*. A good son he was."

Mrs. Levin, still at her dishwashing, raised her head and snorted impatiently.

"Yow — a good son!" she commented in English, "A dirty, lowlife bum he was. If it wouldn't be that he *ganvered* a couple bottles wine from a store he wouldn't of been in the police office at all. He brought it on himself, mister — believe me."

Morris nodded.

"What is *vorbei* is *vorbei*," he said. "Tell your man he should bring his uncle to Steuermann and I would pay him sure twenty-five dollars cash."

He bowed to the *Rav* and with a final "*Sholom alaicham!*" passed downstairs to the street.

As he waited at the corner for a west-bound car he thought he discerned a familiar figure in the shadow of the house he had just quitted. He walked slowly up the block and Harkavy stole out of the basement area and slunk hurriedly past him.

"Harkavy!" Morris called, but the assistant cutter only hastened his steps and it seemed to Morris that a sound like a sob was borne backward.

"What is the trouble, Harkavy?" Morris cried;

but in response Harkavy broke into a run, and with a mystified shake of his head Morris commenced his tedious journey uptown.

When Morris, in company with his partner, entered the showroom at eight o'clock the following morning he had already enumerated to Abe the events of the preceding evening, not omitting his encounter with Harkavy.

"I bet yer he would be waiting for us, Mawruss," Abe said; "and if I ain't mistaken here he is now."

Their visitor, however, proved to be a stranger, who bore only a slight resemblance to their former cutter.

"Mr. Perlmutter," he said — "ain't it?"

"My name is Mr. Perlmutter," Morris said. "What do you want from us?"

For answer the visitor drew from his pocket a card and handed it to Morris.

"Me, I am Pincus Levin, and you are leaving this by my wife last night," he said; "so I am coming to tell you I am agreeable to take Mr. Levin to Steuermann's place."

"All right," Morris replied. "You can go ahead."

Pincus Levin shuffled his feet uneasily, but made no attempt to depart.

"Well?" Morris cried.

"Sure, I know," Pincus said; "but if I would take my uncle, Mr. Levin, to Steuermann, y'understand

and then, maybe — I am only saying, Mr. Perlmutter, you might forget the other part — ain't it?"

"You mean you want your twenty-five dollars in advance?" Morris asked.

"Why not?" Pincus replied. "If I wouldn't took Mr. Levin to-day yet to this here Steuermann's office, Mr. Perlmutter, you could stop the check ——"

Abe shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"An idee!" he cried. "You ain't never seen this feller before, Mawruss — ain't it?"

Morris admitted it.

"Well, then, what's the use talking?" Abe continued. "How do we know he's this here Levin's nephew?"

"Why, Mr. Potash," Levin cried, "I ain't no crook! I got the old man in a coffee house round the corner right now."

"Bring him up here then," Abe said, "and we'll give you your money."

Pincus Levin nodded and shuffled off toward the back stairs, while Abe turned and gazed after him.

"I couldn't make it out at all, Mawruss," he said. "The more I look at that feller, Mawruss, the more he makes me think of this here ——"

"Good morning, Mr. Potash!" a familiar voice interrupted. It was Harkavy.

"Hello there!" Morris cried cheerfully. "I thought you would be here."

Harkavy smiled sadly. His face was white and drawn and his shoes and trousers were covered with mud as though he had walked the streets all night.

"I am keeping my word anyhow," he said; "but I am only coming to tell you I got to go to Chicago."

"Why must you got to go?" Abe insisted.

"Well, there's certain reasons, Mr. Potash," Harkavy replied. "There's certain — rea ——"

He struggled to control his speech as his eyes rested on the rear stairway, but his words became more and more inarticulate until, with a shudder and a gasp, he fell heavily to the floor.

"*Oi gewoldt!*" Abe exclaimed. He rushed to the office for a glass of water, but even before he had reached the cooler he stopped suddenly. A great wailing cry came from the showroom and when he ran back with the water a bearded old man lay prostrate across Harkavy's body.

Only Miss Cohen, the bookkeeper, kept a clear head during the confusion that followed. She despatched Nathan, the shipping clerk, for a doctor and directed her frightened employers to loosen the shirt-bands of the unconscious men.

"Some whiskey!" Morris shouted — and one of the cutters produced it bashfully from his hip-pocket.

"Never try to force whiskey on a fainting person," Miss Cohen cried. "It might get into their lungs and suffocate 'em."

"I wasn't going to," Morris said hastily, as he took a yeoman's pull at the bottle. "I am feeling faint myself."

"*Mir auch*," Abe said, taking the bottle from his partner's grasp. After a refreshing draught he passed it on to Pincus, who returned it empty to the crestfallen cutter just as a physician dashed out of the elevator.

"What caused this trouble?" he asked Abe as he knelt down by the side of Harkavy.

Abe looked helplessly at Morris and turned to Pincus Levin, who commenced to tremble violently.

"Hold on there!" Morris shouted. "He's going to faint too."

Abe seized the glass of ice-water and flung its contents into Pincus Levin's face. He gasped and sat down suddenly.

"The old man," he murmured, "he's Yosel's father."

"Yosel who?" Morris shouted. "The old man's only got one son — and he's dead."

"Yes, I know," Pincus answered; "he is and he ain't. I always thought so too, Mr. Perlmutter, but this feller here is Yosel Levin which he got blew up in Harkav two years ago."

"What d'ye mean got blew up?" Abe asked as the doctor worked steadily over the two prostrate men. "How could he be blew up if he is here now?"

Pincus shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know?" he said weakly. "I ain't lying to you. This feller here is Yosel Levin and my uncle there is his father."

"Do you mean to told me that the old man's son ain't dead at all?" Morris demanded.

"Seemingly," Pincus said; "*aber* this is the first time I heard it and I guess it's the first time the old man heard it too."

Harkavy moaned and tried to sit up.

"Easy there!" the doctor commanded. "Two of you take him inside and put him on a lounge if you have one."

Abe and Morris followed Pincus and the head cutter as they supported the half-conscious Harkavy into the firm's office. Ten minutes later the old man was restored to consciousness.

"*Wo ist er?*" he murmured. "*Mein kind!*"

"It's all right," the doctor replied, and then he turned to the office. "Come out here, you, and talk to the old man."

Pincus came running from the office and reassured his uncle, who, under the ministrations of the doctor, grew rapidly stronger until he was sufficiently recovered to be placed on a chair.

"Keep him quiet while I attend to the other fellow," said the doctor; "and don't let him talk."

He went at once to the office, where Harkavy sat on the edge of the lounge.

"Here! What are you doing?" he cried. "You shouldn't let that fellow do any talking."

"That's all right, doctor," Abe said calmly. "He should go on talking now if it would kill him even. Go ahead, Harkavy."

"And so," Harkavy continued, "after I am stealing the wine they took me to the police office. There was a place! But, anyhow, Mr. Potash, I could tell you all about it afterward. Inside the backyard was a dead moujik which he is got run over by a train. His face is all damaged so you couldn't tell who he was at all."

He faltered and waved his hand.

"Give me, please, a glass water," he said, and the doctor seized his hand.

"Never mind!" Abe cried inexorably. "Leave him alone, doctor. He should finish what he's got to say."

Harkavy nodded and sipped some water.

"Then comes the package for the chief of police," he went on; "and they put it first in a pail of water. Then they open it, Mr. Potash, and it don't harm nobody; but them *roshers* want to put it on to somebody, so they make me a proposition they would give me a couple hundred rubles and a ticket to America — and I took 'em up. For stealing that wine I could get five years yet; so what should I do? They give me the money and I run away; and the dead moujik they are telling everybody is me, which I am blew up to pieces by the package."

"And you let the old man bury the moujik and think it was you?" Morris asked.

Harkavy nodded.

"Over and over again he is telling me I am no good and he wishes I was dead," he said. "I wish I was, Mr. Perlmutter — I wish I was!"

He commenced to cry weakly and Morris handed him the water.

"But when I hear last week the old man, my father, is here," he continued, "I couldn't help myself — I am hanging around Madison Street trying I should get one look at him only. I didn't see him till just now."

He struggled to raise himself from the lounge.

"Let me go to him," he wailed; "let me go!"

Abe looked inquiringly at the doctor, who nodded in reply.

"Let him go," he said. "Happiness never harmed anybody yet."

"Gentlemen," said the United States Commissioner as he sat behind his shabby desk in the Post-office Building, "the prisoner is in the marshal's office. Shall he be brought in?"

He addressed his question to Mr. Munjoy, who was seated between Henry D. Feldman and Steuermann at one side of a huge table. Opposite them were the clerk of the Russian Consulate and his counsel, who was obviously nervous at the formidable

appearance presented by the lawyer, Henry D. Feldman.

The latter was about to pull off — as in his colloquial moments he himself would have expressed it — a rotten trick on his fellow counsel; for Abe and Morris had not informed either Mr. Munjoy or Mr. Steuermann of the stirring scene in their showroom that morning. Instead, they had called on Feldman, who, with the dramatic intuition of the effective jury lawyer, saw an opportunity for a coup that would at once gain the admiration and respect, if not the legal business, of Moses M. Steuermann and procure Feldman a column and a half of publicity in next day's paper. Hence he had sworn Abe and Morris to secrecy in consideration of making no charge for his services, since he deemed the accruing benefit to be worth at least two hundred dollars.

"Shall he be brought in, gentlemen?" the commissioner asked.

Counsel for the Russian Consulate bowed, as did Mr. Munjoy; but Henry D. Feldman cleared his throat with a great rasping noise that penetrated to the corridor without. This was the signal, and Abe and Morris entered the room supporting the old Rabbi, who was followed by Pincus Levin.

"One moment, sir," Feldman said. "I have a preliminary objection to make. Will you hear the offer, sir?"

The commissioner nodded and Steuermann and his counsel Mr. Munjoy, turned to Feldman in amazement.

"What's all this, Feldman?" Munjoy cried.

Feldman waved his hand impressively.

"My objection is, sir, that a gross fraud has been practised on this court. It has come to my attention that somebody connected with this proceeding has furnished a material witness for the defense with a ticket for Chicago and one thousand rubles as a bribe to stay away from the hearing."

Counsel for the complainant jumped to his feet.

"This is preposterous!" he declared.

"By no means," Feldman continued. "Will you direct counsel not to interrupt me, sir, if you please?"

"I so direct," the commissioner replied, whereat Feldman again cleared his throat and coughed twice, and, in answer to this cue, Yosel Levin, alias Joseph Harkavy, entered the room.

"The person so bribed, Mr. Commissioner, is named in the petition as the *corpus delicti* of the crime alleged to have been committed," Feldman said.

"What!" Munjoy and opposing counsel cried in unison, and the clerk to the consulate reached for his hat and started for the door. His counsel leaped after him, however, and succeeded in catching his coat-tails just as he was about to disappear into the hall.

With one hand still grasping the consular clerk,

counsel for the complainant turned to the commissioner.

"I think my client wants to consult me outside for one minute," he said. "Have I your consent to withdraw?"

The commissioner nodded and Munjoy turned to Feldman.

"What the deuce are you trying to do, Feldman?" he asked as complainant's counsel returned.

"If the commissioner pleases," Feldman said, "we consent to a dismissal of the extradition proceedings and to a discharge of the prisoner."

The imperturbable commissioner bowed and rose to his feet.

"Submit the necessary papers for the prisoner's discharge, gentlemen," he said. "The hearing is closed."

"Five dollars for doing what that feller done is like picking it up in the street, Mawruss!" Abe declared to Mawruss when they received the doctor's bill a month later.

"How could we be small about it, Abe?" Morris rejoined. "Look at what Steuermann done! Not only he is paying his lawyers for getting this Kovalenko out of prison but he is taking that young feller and paying for him he should go on with his studying for a doctor."

"Well, the way doctors soak you, Mawruss,"

Abe said, looking at the bill which he held in his hand, "it wouldn't be long before Kovalenko pays him back with interest, I bet yer."

"But, anyhow, Abe," Morris continued, "now we got Yosel Levin working for us as cutter, it would be a better feeling all around supposing we pay the bill and say nothing about it."

"I am agreeable we should say nothing more about it, Mawruss," Abe retorted, "because we already wasted more time and trouble than the whole thing is worth; but one thing I would like to know, Mawruss, before I shut up my mouth: Why did this here feller, Yosel Levin, call himself Harkavy?"

"Say!" Morris said, using three inflections to the monosyllable: "he's got just so much right to call himself Harkavy as all them other guys has to call themselves Breslauer, Hamburger, Leipziger *oder* Berliner. He anyhow does come from Harkav, Abe — which you could take it from me, Abe, there's many a feller calls himself Hamburger which he don't come from no nearer Hamburg than Vilna *oder* Kovno."

Abe shrugged his shoulders expressively in reply.

"My worries where them fellers comes from, Mawruss!" he commented. "Because, when it comes right down to it, Mawruss, if a feller attends to his own business, Mawruss, and don't monkey with politics, y'understand, where could he make a better living than right here in New York, N. Y.?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

"R. S. V. P."

IT was the tenth of the month, and Abe Potash, of Potash & Perlmutter, was going through the firm mail with an exploratory thumb and finger, looking for checks.

"Well, Mawruss," he said to his partner, Morris Perlmutter, "all them hightone customers of yours they don't take it so particular that they should pay on the day, Mawruss. If they was only so prompt with checks as they was to claim deductions, Mawruss, you and me would have no worries. I think some of 'em finds a shortage in the shipment before they open the packing-case that the goods come in. Take your friend Hyman Maimin, of Sarahcuse—nothing suits him. He always kicks that the goods ain't made up right, or we ain't sent him enough fancies, or something like that. Five or six letters he writes us, Mawruss, when he gets the goods; but when he got to pay for 'em, Mawruss, that's something else again. You might think postage stamps was solitaire diamonds, and that he dassen't use 'em!"

"Quit your kicking," Perlmutter broke in. "This is only the tenth of the month."

"I know it," said Abe. "We should have had a check by the tenth of last month, but" — here Abe's eye lit upon an envelope directed in the handwriting of Hyman Maimin — "I guess there was some good reason for the delay," he went on evenly. "Anyhow, here's a letter from him now."

He tore open the envelope and hurriedly removed the enclosed letter. Then he took the envelope, blew it wide open, and shook it up and down, but no check fell out.

"Did y'ever see the like?" he exclaimed. "Sends us a letter and no check!"

"Why, it ain't a letter," Morris said. "It's an advertisement."

Abe's face grew white.

"A meeting of creditors!" he gasped.

Morris grabbed the missive from his partner and spread it out on the table.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, a great smile of relief spreading itself about his ears. "It's a wedding invitation!" He held it up to the light. "'Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Bramson,'" he read, "'request the pleasure of Potash & Perlmutter's company at the marriage of their daughter Tillie to Mr. Hyman Maimin, Sunday, March 19, at seven o'clock, P.M., Wiedermayer's Hall, 2099 South Oswego Street. R.S.V.P. to residence of bride, care of Advance Credit Clothing Company, 2097 South Oswego Street.'"

"What is that 'R.S.V.P. to residence of bride'?" Abe Potash asked.

Morris reflected for a moment.

"That means," he said at length, "that we should know where to send the present to."

"How do you make that out?" said Abe.

"'R.S.V.P.'," Morris replied, emphasizing each letter with a motion of his hand, "means 'Remember to send vedding present.'"

"But," Abe rejoined, "when I went to night school, we spelt 'wedding' with a W.

"A greenhorn like Maimin," said Morris, "don't know no better."

"He knows enough to ask for a wedding present, Mawruss," Abe commented, "even if he don't know how to spell it. We'll send him a wedding present, Mawruss! We'll send him a summons from the court, that's what we'll send him!"

Morris shook his head.

"That ain't no way to talk, Abe," he said. "If a customer gets married, we *got* to send him a wedding present. It don't cost much, and if Hyman Maimin gets a couple of thousand dollars with this Miss — Miss ——"

"Advance Credit Clothing Company," Abe helped out.

Morris nodded.

"Then he buys more goods, ain't it?" he concluded.

"Let him pay for what he's got," Abe rejoined.

"It just slipped his mind. He'll pay up fast enough, after he gets married."

"All right! Wait till he pays up, and then we'll give him a present."

"Now lookyhere, Abe," Morris protested, "you can't be small in a matter of this kind. I'll draw a check for twenty-five dollars, and ——"

"Twenty-five dollars!" Abe screamed. "You're crazy! When you was married last year, I'd like to know who gives you a present for twenty-five dollars?"

"Why you did, Abe," Morris replied.

"Me?" Abe cried. "Say, Mawruss, I want to tell you something. If you can buy a fine sterling silver bumbum dish, like what I give you, for twenty-five dollars, I'll take it off your hands for twenty-seven-fifty any day!"

"But, Abe ——"

"Another thing, Mawruss," Abe went on. "If you don't like that dish, there ain't no law compelling you to keep it, you understand. Send it back. My Rosie can use it. Maybe we ain't so stylish like your Minnie, Mawruss; but if we don't have bumbums every day, we could put dill pickles into it!"

"One moment," Morris protested. "I ain't saying anything about that bumbum dish, Abe. All I meant that if you give *me* such a high-price present

when *I* get married, that's all the more reason why we should give a high-price present to a customer what we will make money on. I ain't no customer, Abe."

"I know you ain't," said Abe. "You're only a partner, and I don't make no money on you, neither."

Morris shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the use of wasting more time about it, Abe?" he said. "Go ahead and buy a present."

"Me buy it?" Abe cried. "You know yourself, Mawruss, I ain't a success with presents. You draw the check and get your Minnie to buy it. She's an up-to-date woman, Mawruss, while my Rosie is a back number. She don't know nothing but to keep a good house, Mawruss. Sterling silver bumbum dishes she don't know, Mawruss. If I took her advice, you wouldn't got no bumbum dish. Nut-picks, Mawruss, from the five-and-ten-cent store, that's what you'd got. You might appreciate them, Mawruss; but a sterling silver——"

At this juncture Morris took refuge in the outer office, where Miss Cohen, the bookkeeper, was taking off her wraps.

"Miss Cohen," he said, "draw a check for twenty-five dollars to bearer, and enter it up as a gratification to Hyman Maimin."

At dinner that evening Morris handed the check over to his wife.

"Here Minnie," he said, "Abe wants you should buy a wedding present for a customer."

"What kind of a wedding present?" Mrs. Perlmutter asked.

"Something in solid sterling silver, like that bumbum dish what Abe gave us."

"But, Mawruss," she protested, "you know we got that bonbon dish locked away in the sideboard, and we never take it out. Let's give 'em something useful."

"Suit yourself," Morris replied. "Only don't bother me about it."

"All right," Mrs. Perlmutter said. "Leave me the name and address, and I'll see that they send it direct from the store. I'll put one of your cards inside."

"And another thing," Morris concluded. "See that you don't hold nothing out on us by way of commission."

Mrs. Perlmutter smiled serenely.

"I won't," she said, in dulcet tones.

It was the fourth day after Potash & Perlmutter's receipt of the wedding invitation. When Morris Perlmutter entered the private office he found Abe Potash in the absorbed perusal of the *Daily Cloak and Suit Record*. Abe looked up and saluted his partner with a malignant grin.

"Well, Mawruss," he said, "I suppose you sent that present to Hyman Maimin?"

"I sent it off long since already," Morris replied.

"I hope it was a nice one, Mawruss," Abe went on "I hope it was a real nice one. I'm sorry now, Mawruss, we didn't spend fifty dollars. That would have made it an even seven hundred, instead of only six hundred and seventy-five, that Hyman Maimin owed us."

"What d'ye mean?" cried Morris.

"I don't mean nothing, Mawruss — nothing at all," Abe said, with ironical emphasis. He handed the paper to Morris. "Here, look for yourself!"

He pointed with a trembling forefinger at the "business-troubles" column, and Morris's eyes seemed to bulge out of his head as he scanned the printed page:

A petition in bankruptcy was filed late yesterday afternoon against Hyman Maimin, 83 West Tonawanda Street, Syracuse. It is claimed that he transferred assets to the amount of eight thousand dollars last week. Mr. Maimin says that he has been doing business at a heavy loss of late, but that he hopes to be able to resume. A settlement of thirty cents is proposed.

Morris sat down in a revolving-chair too crushed for comment, and drummed with a lead pencil on the desk.

"I wonder if he done up his intended father-in-law, too?" he said at length.

"No fear of that, Mawruss," Abe replied. "He ain't no sucker like us, Mawruss. I bet you his father-in-law — what's his name ——"

"The Advance Credit Clothing Company," Morris suggested.

"Sure," Abe went on. "I bet you this clothing concern says to him: 'If you want to marry my daughter, you gotter go into bankruptcy first. Then, when you're all cleaned up, I'll give you a couple of thousand dollars to start as a new beginner in another line.' Ain't it?"

Morris nodded gloomily.

"No, Mawruss," Abe continued. "I bet you his father-in-law is a big crook like himself."

He rose to his feet and opened the large green-and-red covered book furnished by the commercial agency to which they subscribed.

"I'm going to do now, Mawruss, what you should have done before you sent that present," he said. "I'm going to look up this here Advance Credit Clothing Company. I bet you he ain't even in the book — what?"

Before Morris could reply, the letter-carrier entered with the morning mail. While Abe continued to run his thumb down the columns of the commercial agency book, Morris began to open the envelopes. Both their heads were bent over their tasks, when an exclamation arose simultaneously from each.

"Now, what d'ye think of that?" said Abe.

"Did y' ever see anything like it?" Morris cried.

"What is it?" Abe asked.

For answer, Morris thrust a letter into his partner's hand. It was headed, "The Advance Credit Clothing Company — Marcus Bramson, Proprietor," and read as follows:

MESSRS. POTASH & PERLMUTTER.

GENTS:

Your shipment of the 5th is to hand, and in reply would say that we are returning it *via* Blue Line on account Miss Tillie Bramson's engagement is broken. We understand that lowlife H. Maimin got into you for six hundred and fifty dollars. Believe me, he done us for more than that. Our Mr. Bramson will be in New York shortly, and will call to look at your line. Hoping we will be able to do business with you,

Yours truly,

THE ADVANCE CREDIT CLOTHING COMPANY,

Per T. B.

Abe Potash laid down the letter with a sigh, while his thumb still rested caressingly on the open page of the mercantile agency book.

"So he's going to send back the present!" he said. "That man Marcus Bramson, proprietor, has a big heart, Mawruss. He's a man with fine feelings and a fine disposition, Mawruss. He's got a fine rating too, Mawruss — seventy-five to a hundred thousand, first credit!" He closed the book almost lovingly. "D'ye think they would give the money back for that present, Mawruss?"

"I don't know," said Morris. "Minnie bought it, and she told me it was a big bargain. It was a sale, she said, but I guess they'll take it back."

"What did it look like?" Abe said.

"I didn't see it," Morris replied. "They sent it direct from the store, but I took Minnie's word for it. She said it was fine value."

"And Minnie," Abe concluded, "is a fine, up-to-date woman."

Two days later, Abe Potash spotted the name of Marcus Bramson in the "Arrival of Buyers" column of a morning newspaper.

"Mawruss," he cried, "he's come!"

"Who's come?" Morris asked.

"Marcus Bramson," Abe replied, reaching for his hat. "I'm going over to the Bingler House now to meet him. You wait here till I come back. I bet you we sell him a big bill of goods!"

As Abe went out of the store by the front door, an expressman, bearing a square wooden box, entered the rear alley. He brought the package straight to Miss Cohen, who signed a receipt, and summoned Mr. Perlmutter. Morris proceeded to pry off the cover.

"This is something what Mrs. Perlmutter bought for Hyman Maimin's wedding present," he explained. "I ain't never seen it yet."

He pulled out a number of wads of tissue paper. When he finally reached a piece of silverware, he turned the box upside down and shook out the remainder of its contents upon a sample table.

"Oh, Mr. Perlmutter," Miss Cohen exclaimed, clasping her hands, "what a beautiful bonbon dish! What a lovely wedding present!"

Morris looked at the bonbon dish, and beads of perspiration started on his forehead.

"Ain't Mrs. Perlmutter got good taste! Miss Cohen went on enthusiastically.

Morris said nothing, but picked up the silver dish. Examining the polished centre carefully, he discerned the indistinct initials "M. P." almost but not quite effaced by buffing. Undoubtedly it was the same bonbon dish.

He gathered up the tissue paper and carefully arranged it in the box as a bed for the silver dish. Then he put the cover on, and nailed it down.

"Ain't you going to let Mr. Potash see it?" Miss Cohen asked. "He ain't never seen it before, neither, has he?"

Morris frowned.

"I think he has," he replied. "Anyhow, I'm going to send it right uptown by messenger boy."

"Do you think they'll exchange it?" Miss Cohen inquired.

"Oh, I guess it will be put back in stock all right," said Morris, turning away.

The next morning, when Morris entered the store, Abe was busy figuring on the back of a torn envelope.

"Hello, Mawruss!" he cried, looking up. "Ain't it beautiful weather?"

Morris agreed that it was.

"That Mr. Bramson," Abe went on, "that's one fine gentleman, Mawruss. He ain't what you'd call a close buyer, neither, Mawruss."

"No?" Morris commented.

"The way I figure it," Abe continued, "reckoning on what we lost by Hyman Maimin, if he settles for thirty cents, and what we make out of Mr. Bramson's first order, we come out even to the dollar!"

"So?" Morris murmured.

"All excepting that wedding present, Mawruss," Abe. "By the way, Mawruss, ain't that wedding present come back yet?"

"Why, sure," said Morris. "It come back yesterday, when you were out."

"Why ain't you showed it to me? Ain't I got no right to see it, Mawruss?"

"Of course you got a right to see it," Morris assented, "but I thought I'd get it right up town to Minnie and have it exchanged."

"And did she exchange it?" Abe asked.

"Well, it's like this," Morris explained. "Minnie liked it so well that she decided on keeping it, so I'll give the firm my personal check for twenty-five dollars."

Abe puffed hard on his cigar.

"You're a purty generous feller, Mawruss," he commented, "to give Minnie a present like that — for nothing at all, ain't it?"

"Oh, no, I ain't Abe," Morris replied. "I ain't giving it to her for nothing at all. I'm taking it out of her housekeeping money, Abe — five dollars a month!"

CHAPTER NINE

FIRING MISS COHEN

"THERE'S no use talking, Abe," Morris Perlmutter declared to his partner, Abe Potash, as they sat in the sample-room of their spacious cloak-and-suit establishment. "We got a system of bookkeeping that would disgrace a peanut-stand. Here's a statement from the Hamsuckett Mills, and it shows a debit balance of eleven hundred and fifty dollars what we owe them. Miss Cohen's figures is eleven hundred and forty-two."

"That's in our favour already," Abe replied. "The Hamsuckett people must be wrong, Mawruss."

"No, they ain't, Abe," Morris said. "It's Miss Cohen's mistake."

"Mistake?" Abe exclaimed. "When it's in our favour, Mawruss, it ain't no mistake!"

"It's a mistake, anyhow, no matter in whose favour it is," said Morris. "Miss Cohen's footing was wrong. She gets carelesser every day."

"I'm surprised to hear you that you should talk that way, Mawruss," Abe rejoined. "Miss Cohen's

been with us for five years, and we ain't lost nothing by her, neither. You know as well as I do, Mawruss, her uncle, Max Cohen, is a good customer of ours. Only last week he bought of us a big bill of goods, Mawruss."

"Just the same, Abe," Morris went on, "if we get a bright young man in there, instead of Miss Cohen, it would be a big improvement. We ought to get some one in there what can manage a double entry, and can run a card-index for our credits."

Abe puffed vigorously at his cigar.

"I suppose, Mawruss, if we got a card-index and we sell a crook a bill of goods," he commented, "and the crook busts up on us, Mawruss, that card-index is going to stop him from sticking us—what? Well, Mawruss, if you want to put in a young feller and fire Miss Cohen, go ahead—I'm satisfied."

As if to clinch the matter before his partner could retract this somewhat grudging consent, Morris Perlmutter stalked out of the sample-room and made resolutely for the glass-enclosed office, where Miss Cohen was busy writing in a ledger. She looked up as he entered, and surveyed him calmly with her large black eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Perlmutter!" she said when he came within ear-shot, "Uncle Max was round to the house last night, and he wants you should duplicate them forty-twenty-twos in his last order and ship at once."

Morris stopped short. This was something he had not foreseen, and all his well-formulated plans for the firing of Miss Cohen were shattered at once.

"Oh!" he said lamely. "Thank you, Miss Cohen; I'll make a memorandum of it." He went over to the commercial agency book and scanned three or four pages with an unseeing eye. Then he repaired to the sample room, where Abe sat finishing his cigar.

"Well, Mawruss," said Abe, his face wreathed in a malicious grin, "you made a quick job of it."

Morris scowled.

"I ain't spoken to her yet," he grunted. "I got a little gumption, Abe — a little consideration and common sense. I don't throw out my dirty water until I get clean."

Abe puffed slowly before replying.

"I seen some people, Mawruss," he said, "what sometimes throws out perfectly clean water, and gets some dirty water in exchange, Mawruss." He threw away the stump of his cigar.

"Sometimes, Mawruss," he concluded solemnly, "they gets a good, big souse, Mawruss, where they least expect it."

Ike Feinsilver, city salesman for the Hamsuckett Mills — Goldner & Plotkin, proprietors — was obviously his own ideal of a well-dressed man. His shirts and waistcoats represented a taste as original as it was not subdued; but it was in the selection

of his neckties that he really excelled. Abe and Morris fairly blinked as they surveyed his latest acquisition in cravats when he entered the door of their store that afternoon, smiling a pleasant greeting at his prospective customers.

He presented so brilliant a picture that Miss Cohen was drawn from her desk in the glass-enclosed office toward the trio in the sample room as inevitably as the moth to the candle flame. She took up some cutting slips from a table, by way of excuse for her intrusion, but the blush and smile with which she acknowledged Ike's rather perfunctory nod betrayed her. Abe was fingering the Hamsuckett swatches, but Miss Cohen's embarrassment did not escape Morris Perlmutter. He marked it with an inward start, and immediately conceived a brilliant idea.

"Ike," he said, when Abe had completed the giving of a small order and had left them alone together, "a young feller like you ought to get married."

Ike was non-committal.

"Sure Mawruss," he replied. "Every young feller ought to get married."

"I'm glad you look at it so sensible, Ike," Morris went on. "Getting married right, Ike, has been the making of many a young feller. Where d'ye suppose Goldner & Plotkin would be to-day if they hadn't got married right? They'd be selling goods for somebody else, Ike. But Goldner, he

married Bella Frazinsky, with a couple of thousand dollars maybe; and Plotkin, he goes to work and gets Garfunkel's sister — she was pretty old, Ike; but if she ain't got a fine complexion, Ike, she got a couple of thousand dollars, too, ain't it? Well, Plotkin with his two thousand and Goldner with his two thousand, they start in together as new beginners. They gets the selling agency for the Hamsuckett people, and then they makes big money and buys them out. To-day Goldner & Plotkin is rich men, and all because they got married *right!*"

Feinsilver listened with parted lips.

"And now, Ike," Morris continued, "the good seed sown, we talked enough, ain't it? Come on to the office. I want to show you some little mistakes in the Hamsuckett statement."

He conducted Ike to the glass-enclosed office, where Miss Cohen bent low over her ledger. The blush with which she had received Ike's greeting had not entirely disappeared; and, as she glanced up, her large black eyes looked like those of a frightened deer. Morris was forced to admit to himself that if her bookkeeping was doubtful, at least there could be no mistake about her charms. As for Ike, now that the business of securing orders was done with, he surrendered himself to gallantry, for which he had a natural aptitude.

"Ah, Miss Cohen," he said, "ain't it a fine weather?"

A pleased smile spread itself over Morris's face.

"I think I hear the telephone in the sample room," he broke in hurriedly. "Excuse me for a moment."

When he returned, Ike and Miss Cohen were chatting gaily.

"What do you think of *that?*" Morris cried. "My Minnie just rang me up and says she got tickets for the theayter to-morrow night — two tickets. We can't use 'em, because we're going to a — a wedding. Would you two young folks like to go, maybe?"

"Why, sure," Ike said. "Sure we would. Wouldn't we, Miss Cohen?"

Miss Cohen assented bashfully.

"Well, then," said Morris, "I'll get 'em for you — I mean I'll send 'em you by mail to-night, Ike."

Ike was profuse in his thanks; and then and there arranged to call for Miss Cohen at half-past seven, sharp, the following evening.

Morris beamed his approval and shook hands heartily with Ike as the latter turned to leave.

"How about that mistake in the statement?" Ike asked.

"Some other time," said Morris, walking with Ike toward the store-door. Then he sank his voice to a confidential whisper. "That's a fine girl, Miss Cohen," he went on. "Comes of fine family,

too. She's Max Cohen's niece. You know Max Cohen. He's the Beacon Credit Outfitting Company. He's a *millionaire*, Ike. If he's worth a cent, he's worth a hundred thousand dollars!"

Ike turned on him an awed yet searching look as they clasped hands again in parting.

"I give you my word, Ike, she's his favourite niece," Morris concluded, "*and he ain't got no children of his own.*"

The ensuing week was a busy one for all concerned. Abe was occupied in the store with an unusual rush of spring trade, Morris had his hands full in the office and cutting-room; but Miss Cohen and Ike Feinsilver had been busiest of all, for in less than six days after their visit to the theatre a solitaire diamond-ring sparkled on the third finger of the lady's left hand.

"Well, Mawruss," Abe said ten days later, "I suppose you fired Miss Cohen?"

"Me fire Miss Cohen?" Morris exclaimed. "I'm surprised to hear you that you should talk that way, Abe. What for should I fire Miss Cohen?"

"Why, last week you said you was going to fire her, ain't it?"

"Last week," Morris replied, "was another day. If I ain't got no more sense than that I should go to a fine young lady like Miss Cohen, and say, 'Miss Cohen, you're fired,' after she worked for

us five years, and her uncle also a good customer, I should be sorry, Abe."

"Then, we're going to keep her, after all — what?" Abe said.

"No, we ain't going to keep her," said Morris. "We're going to lose her."

"*Lose* her! What d'ye mean?"

Morris smiled in a superior way.

"Abe," he said, "you ain't got no eyes in your head. Ain't you noticed that ring on Miss Cohen's left hand?"

Abe stared in astonishment.

"It's a beauty, Abe," Morris went on. "A bright young feller like Ike Feinsilver don't get stuck, no matter what he buys. He got it through Plotkin's cousin down on Maiden Lane."

Abe sat down to ponder over the news.

"You mean," he said at length, "that Ike Feinsilver, of the Hamsuckett Mills, is going to marry Miss Cohen?"

"You guessed it right, Abe," Morris replied.

"And who fixed it up?" said Abe.

Morris slapped his chest proudly.

"I did," he replied.

Abe smoked on in silence.

"I suppose I must congratulate her, Mawruss?" he said at length, starting to rise.

"There's no hurry," said Morris. "I let her go uptown this morning. She wanted to do some shopping."

Abe sat down again.

"You done a smart piece of work, Mawruss, I must say," he admitted. "Ike's a good feller, and Miss Cohen'll make him a good wife, even if she ain't a good bookkeeper. Also, we done a good turn to Max Cohen. I bet he's pleased. I wonder he ain't been around yet."

Hardly had the words issued from Mr. Potash's mouth, when the store-door opened to admit a short, thick-set person, and then closed again with a bang that threatened every pane of glass in the vicinity. There was no hesitation about the newcomer's actions. He made straight for the sample room, and had almost reached it before Abe could scramble to his feet. The latter rushed forward and grabbed the visitor's hand.

"Mr. Cohen," he cried, "what a pleasure this is! I congratulate you!"

Mr. Cohen withdrew his hand from Abe's cordial grasp.

"You congradulate *me*, hey?" he said, with slow and ironic emphasis. "Mawruss Perlmutter *also* congradulates me — what?" He fixed the unhappy Morris with a terrible glare. "Don't congradulate *me*," he went on. "Congradulate Ike Feinsilver and Beckie Cohen." He gathered force as he proceeded. "Fools!" he continued in a rapid crescendo. "Meddlers! You spill my blood! You ruin me! I'm a millionaire, you tell Feinsilver. I've got

nothing to do with my money but that I should throw it away in the street!"

"*Mister* Cohen," Morris protested, "you'll make yourself sick."

"I'll make *you* sick!" Cohen rejoined. "I'll make for you a blue eye, too. *Five thousand dollars* I got to give her!"

Abe whistled involuntarily.

"I should think two thousand would be plenty," he suggested.

Max Cohen turned on him with another glare.

"What!" he shrieked. "Am I a beggar? Should I give my niece a miserable two thousand dollars? Ain't I got no pride? I *got* to make it five thousand!" He paused while his imagination dwelt on the magnitude of this colossal sum. "Five thousand dollars!" he shrieked again, "and business the way it is!"

Mr. Perlmutter laid a soothing palm on Cohen's shoulder.

"But, Mr. Cohen," he said, "what can *we* do? Why should you tell *us* all this?"

Mr. Cohen shook off Morris's caress.

"You're right," he said. "Why should I tell you all this? I didn't come here to tell you this. I come here to tell you something else. I come here to tell you to cancel all orders what I give you. Also, if you or your salesman come by my place ever again, look out; that's all. The way I feel it

now, I'll murder you!" He turned to leave. "And another thing," he concluded. "One thing, you can depend on it. So far what I can help it, you don't sell one dollar's worth of goods to any of my friends, never no more!"

Again the door banged explosively, and Mr. Cohen was gone.

For ten minutes there was an awed silence in the sample room. At length Abe looked at his partner with a sickly smile.

"Well, Mawruss," he said, "you made a nice mess of it, ain't you?"

Morris was too stunned to reply.

"That's what comes of not minding your own business," said Abe. "We lose a good customer, and maybe several good customers. We lose a good bookkeeper, too, Mawruss — one what has been with us for five years; and also we are out a wedding present."

"I meant it good," Morris protested. "I done it for the best. It says in the Talmud, Abe, that we are commanded to promote marriages."

Abe waggled his head solemnly.

"This is the first time I hear it, that you are a Talmudist, Mawruss!" he said.

A month passed, and Miss Cohen continued to apply herself to her daily task at Potash & Perlmutter's books.

"I don't understand it, Mawruss," Abe said one

morning. "Why don't that girl quit her job? She must have all sorts of things to do — clothes to buy and furniture to pick out, ain't it?"

Perlmutter shrugged his shoulders.

"I spoke to her about it," he replied, "and she says so long as we're so busy here, she guesses she will stay on the job as long as she can. She says her mommer and her sister can do all the shopping for her."

"You see, Mawruss, what a mistake you make," Abe commented with a sigh.

"That's a fine girl, that Miss Cohen!"

Morris nodded gloomily. He began to realize that he had made a mistake, after all. Only that morning Mrs. Perlmutter had demanded twenty dollars with which to make over her best frock for Miss Cohen's wedding.

"Sure, she's a fine girl," he agreed; "but you got to admit yourself, Abe, that a growing business like ours needs a hustling young man for a bookkeeper."

"That's all right, too, Mawruss," said Abe; "but you also got to admit that what a growing business like ours needs most of all, Mawruss, is customers; and so far what I see, we don't gain any customers by this. Also, my wife has got to make a new dress for the wedding. She told me so this morning."

Morris made no reply. He was growing heartily

sick of this business of firing Miss Cohen, and consoled himself with the thought that the wedding was fast approaching, and that they would be rid of her for good.

At length the wedding-day arrived. Miss Cohen left Potash & Perlmutter's at four o'clock, for the ceremony was set for half-past seven in the evening. Her parting with her employers was an embarrassing one for all three. Abe handed her a check for twenty-five dollars, with the firm's blessing, and Morris shook her hand in comparative silence. He had done and suffered much for that moment of leave-taking; and further than wishing her a long and happy married life, he said nothing. As for Abe, the squandering of twenty-five dollars, without hope of return, temporarily exhausted his capacity for emotion.

"Good luck to you, Miss Cohen," he said. "Hope we see you again soon."

"Oh, sure!" Miss Cohen replied cheerfully. "You'll be at the wedding to-night?"

Abe nodded — they all nodded — and then, with a final handshake all around, Miss Cohen departed.

It must be confessed that the wedding reception that evening was a very enjoyable occasion for all the guests, with the possible exception of Max Cohen. The wine flowed like French champagne at four dollars a quart, while, as Morris Perlmutter at once deduced from the careful way in which the

waiters disguised the label with a napkin, it was really domestic champagne of an inferior quality. Nevertheless, Abe Potash drank more than his share, in a rather futile attempt to get back, in kind, part of the twelve and a half dollars he had contributed toward Miss Cohen's wedding-present, to say nothing of the cost of his wife's gown.

Consequently, on the morning after the festivities he entered his place of business in no very pleasant frame of mind. He found that Morris had already arrived.

"Well, Mawruss," he said in greeting, "everything went off splendid — for Feinsilver. Max Cohen came down with a certified check for five thousand dollars, you and me got rid of about over a hundred, counting the wedding-present and our wives' dresses, and Miss Cohen got a husband and a lot of cut glass, while *me* — I got a headache!"

Morris grunted.

"I guess you don't feel too good yourself, ain't it?" Abe went on. "Anyhow, you got to get busy now, and find some smart young feller to keep the books. You got rid of your dirty water, Mawruss; now you got to get some clean. Did you put an 'ad' in the papers, Mawruss?"

"No, I ain't," Morris snapped.

"Ain't you going to?"

"What for?" Morris growled. "We don't need no bookkeeper."

"Why not?" Abe cried.

Morris nodded in the direction of the office.

"Because we *got* one," he replied.

Abe turned toward the little glass enclosure. He gasped in amazement, and nearly swallowed the stump of his cigar, for at the old stand, industriously applying herself to the books of Potash & Perlmutter, sat Mrs. Isaac Feinsilver, *née* Cohen.

A moment later the door opened, and Isaac Feinsilver entered, immaculately clothed in a suit of zebra-like design. He proceeded to the bookkeeper's office and kissed the blushing bride; then he repaired to the sample room.

"Good morning, Mawruss! Good morning, Abe!" he said briskly. "Ain't it a fine weather?" He threw a bundle of swatches upon the sample table. "My partners, Goldner & Plotkin, and me" — here he paused to note the effect — "is putting out a fine line of spring goods, and I want to show you some."

Abe and Morris looked over Ike's line in dazed astonishment; and before they were really cognizant of what was going on, Ike had booked a generous order. He gathered up the samples into a neat little heap and put them under his arm.

"That ain't so bad," he said, "for a honeymoon order."

Then he turned and strode toward the bookkeeper's office. Once more he saluted the lips of

his assiduous spouse, and a moment later he was walking rapidly down the street. Abe looked after him and expelled a huge breath.

"You find it in the Talmud that we are commanded to promote marriages, ain't it, Mawruss?" he said. "But one thing's sure, Mawruss — you can't run a cloak-and-suit business according to the Talmud." There was a short silence. "Did you ask her why she comes back, Mawruss?" he said.

Morris took the end off a particularly black cigar with one vicious bite.

"I didn't have to ask her. She told me," he said bitterly. "She says a smart girl can get a husband any day, she says; but a good job is hard to find, and when you got one, you should stick to it!"

CHAPTER TEN

AUX ITALIENS

"WHAT are you talking nonsense, Abe," Morris Perlmutter declared hotly, one morning in December; "an elegant class of people lives in the houses. On the same floor with me lives Harry Baskof, which he is just married a daughter of Maisener & Finkman. You remember Max Finkman, for years a salesman for B. Senft & Co. Downstairs is a lawyer, a young feller by the name Sholy, and on the ground floor is Doctor Eichendorfer."

"With lawyers, Mawruss," Abe said, "we got enough to do downtown, ain't it? Doctors also, Mawruss. I am once living next door to a doctor, and every time I meet that feller he says 'How do you do?' to me like he would mean, 'It's a fine day for an operation.' I get a pain in my right side whenever I think of him even."

"Never mind, Abe," Morris rejoined. "Oncet in a while a doctor in the house comes in pretty handy — a lawyer too. A feller could get a whole lot of pointers riding up and down in an elevator with a lawyer. Ain't it? The only trouble about

the house is the family above us, which the lady is all the time hollering like somebody would be giving her a licking already. Minnie says that she hears from our girl that her girl says she was an opera singer in the old country."

"Yow, an opera singer in the old country!" Abe exclaimed skeptically. "In Russland they don't got so many opera singers as all that."

"What d'ye mean, in Russland?" Morris demanded. "The woman ain't from Russland at all. She's an Italiener. I am coming up in the elevator last night with her husband and a friend, and the way they are talking to each other it sounds like a couple of bushelers in a factory. I tell you the honest truth, Abe, for me it don't make no difference if a feller would be a Frencher *oder* an Irishman, so long as he treats me white I would be a good feller, Abe; but an Italiener, Abe, is something else again. An Italiener would as lief stick a knife into you as look at you, Abe, and they smell the whole house out with garlic yet."

"There's lots of things smells worse as garlic, Mawruss," Abe retorted, "and as for sticking a knife into you, that's all *schmooes*. There's lots of people worser as Italieners, I bet yer, and when it comes right down to it, Mawruss, I'd a whole lot sooner have a couple Italieners working for me as some of them fellers which they are coming over from Russland."

"Since when did you got such friendly feelings for Italieners, Abe?" Morris inquired satirically.

"Never mind!" Abe exclaimed. "You could knock an Italiener all you want, Mawruss, but you could take it from me, Mawruss, when an Italiener's got work to do he don't stand around talking a lot of nonsense instead of attending to business, like some people I know."

With this scathing rejoinder Abe trudged off toward the cutting room and Morris proceeded to the office. He had hardly seated himself comfortably at his desk, however, when Abe burst into the room.

"That's the way it goes, Mawruss," he cried. "Half the time we sit and *schmooes* in the showroom and we don't know what goes on in our cutting room at all."

"What's the matter now?" Morris asked.

"Harkavy has quit us again," Abe replied.

"Quit us!" Morris exclaimed. "What for?"

"Nothing. All I says to the feller was why them piece goods is on the floor, and he says he is sick and tired and I should get another designer."

Morris bit the end off a new cigar and glared ferociously at Abe.

"So," he said bitterly, "we lose another designer through you, Abe. What do you think, a designer would stand for abuse the same like a partner, Abe?"

"What d'ye mean — abuse, Mawruss?" Abe

protested. "I ain't said no abuse to the feller at all; and even if I would, Mawruss, I guess I could talk like how I want to in my own cutting room, Mawruss."

Morris rose to his feet.

"*Schon gut*, Abe," he said. "Don't ask me I should step right into Harkavy's shoes and work like a dawg till you are finding a new designer, Abe. Them days is past, Abe."

"You shouldn't worry yourself, Mawruss," Abe retorted. "The way business is so rotten nowadays, y'understand, we would quick get another designer."

"Would you?" Morris cried. "Well, I guess I got something to say about that, Abe. If you think we are going to work to hire a designer which he is getting fired by every John, Dick and Harry, you got another think coming. This time, Abe, I would hire the designer, and don't you forget it."

"Did I say I wanted to do it, Mawruss?" Abe asked. "Go ahead and hire him, Mawruss, only one thing I got to ask you as a favour: don't say the feller was my choice, Mawruss; because I wipe my hands from the whole matter."

For the remainder of the day Morris and Abe maintained only such speaking relations as were necessary to the conduct of their business, and when Morris went home that evening he wore so gloomy an air that Harry Baskof, who rode up on the elevator with him, was moved to comment.

"What's the matter, Mawruss?" he said. "You look like your best customer would be asking an extension on you."

"We don't sell such people at all, Harry," Morris said bitterly. "Collections is all right, Harry, but when a feller's got a partner which he is got such a quick temper, understand me, that he fires out the help faster as I could hire 'em — I got a right to look worried. Our designer leaves us to-day."

"Ain't that terrible, Mawruss," Harry said in mock sympathy. "I suppose you couldn't walk for miles on Fifth Avenue between Eighteenth and Twenty-third Street and break your neck falling over a hundred designers which they are hanging around there looking for jobs."

They alighted at the third floor and Morris drew his latchkey from his waistcoat pocket.

"Sure, I know, Harry," he retorted. "Them people which they already got designers could always find a better one, y'understand, but when you ain't got a designer, Harry, that's something else again. You could advertise until you are blue in the face, and all the answers you get is from fellers which they couldn't design a sausage casing for a frankfurter already."

"*Schmooes*, Mawruss!" Harry cried. "I could get you thousands of designers. In fact, Mawruss, only this afternoon my father-in-law, Mr. Finkman,

sends me over a man which he is working for years by Senft & Co. as a designer, I should give him a job. I already got a good designer, so what could I do?"

"Why didn't you think to send him over to me, Harry?" Morris said.

"How should I know you wanted a designer?" Harry rejoined. "But, anyhow, maybe it ain't too late yet. After supper I would ring up Mr. Finkman and I'll let you know."

"Much obliged," Morris said, as he turned the key and entered his own apartment. He was so far restored to good humour by his conversation with Harry Baskof that when he bestowed his evening kiss on Minnie he failed to notice that her eyes were somewhat swollen.

"Yes, Minnie," he said, "that's the way it is when you got good neighbours."

"Good neighbours!" Minnie said bitterly, and then for the first time Morris observed her swollen eyelids.

"Why, Minnie *leben*," he exclaimed as he folded her in a second embrace, "what's the trouble?"

"Don't, Morris," Minnie said almost snappishly, as she wriggled away from him; "my waist is mussed up enough from working in the kitchen, without your crushing it."

"Working in the kitchen!" Morris said. "What's the matter? Is Tillie sick?"

"No, she isn't," Minnie replied, as she rushed off toward the kitchen. "She's gone."

Morris hung up his coat and made his perfunctory toilet without another word. Despite Minnie's pathetic appearance, there was a dangerous gleam in her eyes that urged Morris to the exercise of the most delicate marital diplomacy.

"What a soup!" he exclaimed, as he subjected the first spoonful to a long, gurgling inhalation. "If they got such soup as this at the Waldorf, Minnie *leben*, I bet yer the least they would soak you for it is a dollar."

Following the soup came boiled brisket, a dish that Morris loathed. Ordinarily Morris would have eaten it with sulky diffidence, but when Minnie bore the steaming dish from the kitchen he not only jumped from his seat to take it from her hands, but after he had deposited it on the table he kissed her on the forehead with lover-like delicacy.

"How did you know I am thinking all the way up on the subway if Minnie would only got *Brust-deckel* for supper for a change what a treat it would be?" he said.

Minnie's glum face broke into a smile and Morris fairly beamed.

"What do you bother your head so about a girl leaves you, Minnie *leben*," he cried. "You could get plenty of girls. On Lenox Avenue a feller could break his neck already falling over girls which is hanging around looking for jobs."

"Oh, I know you can get lots of girls," Minnie

agreed, "but you've got to train them, Morris; but then, too, I wouldn't care so much, but those awful Italians upstairs went and stole Tillie away from me."

"What!" Morris shouted. "Them Italieners done it? Well, what do you think of that for a dirty trick?"

"And they only pay her three dollars a month more," Minnie continued.

"Three dollars a month more, hey?" Morris replied. "Well, that's the way it is, Minnie. Honestly, Minnie, anybody which they would steal away from you somebody which is working for you, it ain't safe to live in the same house with them at all. A feller which steals away feller's help would pick a pocket. Such cut-throats you couldn't trust at all." He helped himself to some more brisket.

"Never mind, Minnie," he said, "if it would be necessary we will pay a girl a couple dollars more a week so long as we get a good one."

"Will we?" Minnie said. "Since when are you running this house, Morris?"

"I was only talking in a manner of speaking," he hastened to say. "Where do you buy such good *Brustdeckel*, Minnie? Honestly, it takes in a way a genius to pick out such meat."

"Does it?" Minnie rejoined. "I ordered it over the 'phone, and furthermore, Morris, if you make so much noise eating it you will wake the boy."

"I'm all through, Minnie," Morris said. "Wait — I'll show you how I could help you wash the dishes."

As he started for the kitchen with one butter-plate in his hand the doorbell rang, whereupon he returned the butterplate to the dining-room table and hastened down the hall.

"Hallo, Mawruss," cried Harry Baskof as Morris opened the door. "I rung up the old man and he says he got the feller a job with Sammet Brothers."

"Come inside," Morris answered, and led the way to the parlour. He motioned his visitor to a seat and produced a box of cigars.

"Do you mean to say the feller got a job as quick as all that?" he continued.

"He sure did, Mawruss," Harry replied. "He's an elegant designer, Mawruss, and if B. Senft knew his business he never would got rid of him at all."

"Why, what did he done to B. Senft?" Morris asked.

"Nothing at all, Mawruss. Senft is crazy. He gets a prejudice against the feller all of a sudden on account he's an Italiener."

"Italiener!" Morris cried.

"Sure," Harry replied. "Did you ever hear the like, Mawruss, that a man like Senft, which his folks *oser* come over in the Mayflower neither, y'understand, should kick on account a feller is an Italiener? And mind you, Mawruss, the feller is

otherwise perfectly decent, respectable feller by the name Enrico Simonetti."

Morris nodded.

"With a name like that he must got to be a good designer," he commented, "otherwise Sammet Brothers wouldn't hire him at all. It would take a whole lot more gumption than Leon Sammet got it to call such a feller from the cutting room even."

"That's all right, Mawruss. You don't have to call such a feller from the cutting room. He could run a cutting room as well as design garments; and in fact, Mawruss, when Sammet Brothers pay that feller two thousand a year, y'understand, they are practically getting him for nothing."

"Two thousand a year!" Morris exclaimed. "Why, we ourselves would pay him twenty-five hundred."

"The feller's worth four thousand if he's worth a cent, Mawruss, but the way business is so rotten nowadays he was willing to take two thousand. *Aber* my father-in-law, Mr. Finkman, told me on the 'phone, the roar this feller puts up when Leon Sammet offers him eighteen hundred, Leon was pretty near afraid for his life already."

"I don't blame him," Morris commented. "Such highwaymen like Sammet Brothers they would beat a feller's price down to nothing. We ain't that way with our help, Harry. If we would got a good man working by us we —— "

"Morris!" cried a voice from the kitchen.

"Yes," Morris replied, jumping to his feet. In less than two minutes he reappeared and approached Harry with an apologetic smile. "Would you excuse me a couple minutes, Harry?" he asked. "I got to run over to the grocer for a box of soap powder. Our girl threw up her job on us."

"I'll go with you," Harry replied. "I need to get a little air."

A minute later they walked down the street to Lenox Avenue, and as they approached the corner Harry nodded to a short, dark personage who was proceeding slowly down the street.

"Al-lo!" he cried, seizing Harry by the arm, "adjer do?"

"Fine, thanks," Harry said. "Let me introduce you to a friend of mine by the name Mr. Perlmutter. This is Mr. Simonetti, Mawruss, which I am talking to you about."

Morris shook hands limply.

"You don't tell me," he said. "You know me, Mr. Simmons? My partner is Mr. Potash. I guess you hear B. Senft speak about us."

"Sure," Simonetti said. "Mister Senft ees always say: 'Mister Potash and Perlmutter ees nice-a people.' Sure."

"Better than Sammet Brothers?" Harry asked.

Simonetti raised his eyebrows and made a flapping gesture with his right hand.

"A-oh!" he said. "Sammet Brothers, that's all right too. Not too much-a all right, Mr. Baskof, but is preety good people. I am just-a now go to see ees-a lawyer for sign-a da contract."

"Ain't you signed the contract yet?" Morris cried.

"Not-a yet," Simonetti answered. "Just-a now I am going."

"Baskof," Morris urged, "supposing you and me goes together with Mr. Simonetti to the Harlem Winter Garden and talks the thing over."

Simonetti looked amazedly at Baskof.

"Sure," Baskof said. "It ain't too late if he ain't signed the contract."

"What do you mean?" Simonetti asked.

"Why, I mean this, Simonetti," Baskof replied. "Sammet Brothers will give you a contract for two thousand dollars, and Perlmutter here is willing to pay you twenty-five hundred. Ain't that right, Mawruss?"

Morris nodded.

"With privilege to renew it, Mawruss, ain't it?"

Again Morris nodded. "One year renewal," he said.

Simonetti looked earnestly at Morris, who fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and produced a cigar.

"Do you smoke, Mr. Simmons?" he began.

"Simonetti," the designer interrupted, as he took the cigar and bit off the end; "and eef ees too much-a you say Simonetti, call me 'Enery."

When Morris entered his place of business the following morning he appeared to be in no better humour than when he left for home the previous evening.

"Well, Abe," he announced, "I hired a soap powder."

Abe stared at him for a moment.

"What are you talking nonsense, you hired a soap powder?" he exclaimed. "Are you *verrückt?*"

Morris snapped his fingers.

"A soap powder!" he cried. "Hear me talk! I mean a designer. I hired a designer, Abe, a first-class feller."

"What d'ye mean, a first-class feller?" Abe demanded. "You are leaving here last night half-past six, and here it is only eight o'clock next morning and already you hired a designer which he is a first-class feller. How do you know he is a first-class feller, Mawruss? Did you dream it?"

"No, I didn't dream it, Abe," Morris said as he hung up his hat; "and what is more I want to tell you something. Yesterday you are saying I should go ahead and hire a designer and not bother you in your head, and to-day you are kicking yet. Well, you could kick all you want to, Abe, because if a feller's partner kicks *oder* his wife kicks, Abe, he must got to stand for it. But just the same, Abe, this here feller comes to work for us Monday morning, and we got with him a contract, all signed and g'fixed

by a lawyer, which he gets from us twenty-five hundred a year for one year, with privilege to renew for another year."

"Twenty-five hundred dollars!" Abe exclaimed. "By a lawyer? What are you talking about, Mawruss?"

At this juncture Morris grew purple with rage.

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," he yelled, "ask me no questions. I am sick and tired of it. You would think if a feller forgets to buy a packet soap powder, y'understand, his wife wouldn't go crazy and ring up the police station yet, on account I am going with Baskof and this here cutter to see a lawyer by the name Sholy, which he lives in my flathouse yet. There we are sitting till twelve o'clock fixing up the contract, and if you don't like it you could lump it. When I come home I got to get Doctor Eichendorfer yet to tend to Minnie. Five dollars that robber soaks me, and he lives in the same house with me. Also this lawyer Sholy charges me also twenty-five dollars for drawing the contract, understand me, which Feldman himself would only charge us fifty. Neighbours them fellers is, Abe! Such neighbours I would expect to got it if I am living next door to Sing Sing prison."

For more than an hour Abe pressed the matter no further, but at length curiosity impelled him to speak. "Say, lookyhere, Mawruss," he began, "couldn't I look at that contract too?"

"Sure you could," Morris replied. "I'm surprised you ain't got no more interest in the matter you didn't ask me before."

Abe grunted and took the contract that Morris handed to him. "This agreement," it ran, "made and entered into between Abraham Potash and Morris Perlmutter, composing the firm of Potash & Perlmutter, of the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York, parties of the first part, and Enrico Simonetti, of the same place, party of the second part, witnesseth —— "

At this point Abe dropped the contract.

"Mawruss," he said slowly, "do you mean to told me you are hiring for a designer an Italiener?"

"Sure," Morris replied; "why not?"

"Why not!" Abe bellowed. "Why not! Ain't you and me married men? Ain't we got wives? Ain't you got a child to support as well?"

"What's that got to do with it?" Morris asked.

"What's that got to do with it?" Abe repeated. "I'm surprised to hear you you should talk that way, Mawruss. Supposing it is necessary we should tell such a feller he is coming down late *oder* he is doing something which he shouldn't do, y'understand, then the very first thing you know he sticks into us a knife *und fertig*. I suppose, Mawruss, you are figuring that even if you don't carry such good insurance, Mawruss, your wife is young and could easy get married again. But with me is

differencely. My wife ain't so young no longer and ——"

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," Morris interrupted, "don't talk no more such nonsense to me, because I seen the feller and I am sitting with him last night over three hours. That feller would no more stick into you a knife as I would."

"No?" Abe commented.

"And furthermore, Abe, when you are saying that Italieners stick knives, understand me, you are talking like a greenhorn. Italieners is decent, respectable people like anybody else, Abe, and just because when you are going on the opera a couple Italieners stabs themselves, like I am seeing it last week a show by the name Paliatzki, y'understand, that ain't no sign every Italiener is a stabber, understand me. For that matter, Abe, after this here show Paliatzki comes a whole lot of fellers from Russland on to the stage, which they are dancing so quick I never seen the like, understand me, and you know as well as I do, Abe, we got plenty fellers from Russland working by us here which they could no more dance as they could fly."

Abe shrugged again.

"Never mind, supposing they wouldn't be stabbers even, Mawruss," he continued, "if you got working for you an Italiener which you just broke in good, y'understand, so soon as he saves a couple hundred dollars he right away quits you and goes back to

the old country. All them fellers is eating is garlic and *Lockshen mit* holes into it, and you know as well as I do, Mawruss, for two hundred dollars a feller could buy enough *Lockshen und Knoblauch* to last him for the rest of his natural life. Whereas Mawruss, you take a feller which he is coming over here from Russland, y'understand, and he wouldn't go back to the old country not if you was to make him a present of it free for nothing."

"Is it anything against them Italieners if they save their money, Abe?" Morris asked.

"All right, Mawruss," Abe said, "supposing Italieners is such big savers, understand me, one thing you must anyhow got to admit, Mawruss. You get a couple Italieners working for you, understand me, and from morning till night they never give you a minute's peace. Seemingly they must got to sing. They couldn't help themselves, Mawruss."

"What do we care if he hollers a little something oncet in a while, Abe?" Morris protested. "We could stand it if he turns out some good styles."

"*If* he turns out good styles is all right, Mawruss," Abe said as he turned away. "Lots of accidents could happen to a feller in the garment business, Mawruss. Burglars could bust into his loft and steal his silk piece goods on him; he could have maybe a fire; he could fall down the elevator shaft and break, *Gott soll hüten*, his neck. All these things

could come to a garment manufacturer, Mawruss; but that his designer should turn out some good styles is an accident which don't happen to one garment manufacturer out of a hundred, Mawruss."

Nevertheless, long before Enrico Simonetti's term of employment had expired Abe was obliged to acknowledge his mistake.

Not only had Enrico proved his efficiency and originality as a designer but he had exercised the utmost discretion in the management of the cutting room. Moreover, he had little taste for music and never so much as whistled a melody during working hours.

"I couldn't make him out at all, Mawruss," Abe declared one morning. "Actually the feller complains to me this morning he couldn't stand that little greenhorn we hired last week on account he smells so from garlic."

"Sure, I know," Morris replied, "and he don't smoke and he don't *shikker*, and he tells me yesterday he boards with a family on Second Avenue which all it costs him is four dollars a week. And yet you, Abe, you are kicking because the feller is an Italiener."

"When was I kicking to you the feller is an Italiener?" Abe demanded. "Why, you yourself, Mawruss, always says to me Italieners is no good. If you are telling me oncet you are telling me a hundred times about an Italiener family which they

are living on top of you, Mawruss, and, to hear you talk, such *Roshoyim* you wouldn't believe existed at all."

"Sure, I know," Morris admitted, "but there's Italieners and Italieners, Abe; and only last night them people sits up till two o'clock this morning *shikkering* and hollering. Not alone the woman hollers, Abe, but a feller sings that big song from Paliatzki till I thought my head would bust. Some one should write to the Board of Health about it, Abe."

"My *tzuris!*" Abe exclaimed. "If you got living in the same house with you a lawyer and a doctor, Mawruss, you shouldn't got much trouble getting the Board of Health after them Italieners. And anyhow, Mawruss, if the worser comes to the worst, y'understand, there's one thing you could always do.

"What's that?" Morris asked.

"Move out," Abe replied, as he started for the cutting room.

"Yes, Mawruss," he commented, when he returned five minutes later, "you could knock the Italieners all you want, but you got to admit they ain't throwing their money into the street. Henry is showing me just now a bankbook which in the last nine months he is putting away eighteen hundred dollars."

"That's all right, Abe," Morris said. "If he would be from *unsere Leute*, y'understand, instead

he is putting the money in savings bank and getting 3 per cent. interest, he would invest it in something else and make it pretty near double itself soon."

"What d'ye mean, 3 per cent. interest?" Abe retorted. "Henry's got his money in a bank which they are paying him 5 per cent. compounded every three months. Henry ain't no fool, Mawruss."

"Five per cent.!" Morris exclaimed. "What for a bank would pay 5 per cent. interest, Abe?"

"I don't know what for a bank pays 5 per cent., Mawruss," Abe replied, "but you could take it from me, Mawruss, the way Sam Feder discounts perfectly good A number one accounts for them depositors of his when they are a little short, Mawruss, not only could the Kosciusko Bank afford to pay five per cent., Mawruss, but they could also give 6 or 7, and still Sam Feder's wife wouldn't got to pawn none of her diamonds."

"Does he deposit his money with Feder?" Morris asked.

"Yow, he deposit his money with Feder, Mawruss!" Abe replied. "He deposits his money with a banker by the name Guy-seppy Scratch-oly."

"Guy-seppy Scratch-oly," Morris repeated. "That's a fine name for a banker, Abe."

"Guy-seppy, that's Italian for Yosef, Mawruss," Abe explained. "And Scratch-oly is an Italian name the same like a feller in Russland would be called

Lipschutzky. For that matter, Mawruss, Lipschutzky ain't much of a name for a banker neither."

"No," Morris admitted, "but I'd a whole lot sooner trust my money to a feller by the name Lipschutzky *oder* Feder, as to one of the Scratchy names, Abe."

"What is the difference what the banker's name is?" Abe rejoined. "Henry says the money is all sent by his bank to a branch they got in the old country. *Gott weiss* what that bank couldn't get for its money in the old country, because you know as well as I do, Mawruss, here in New York City some business men is short oncet in a while, understand me, but over in the old country everybody is short all the time. The way banks does business over there, Mawruss, they make Feder's bank look like a Free Loan Association."

"Sure, I know, Abe," Morris said gloomily, "and you mark my words, Abe, so soon as Henry's year is up he will follow his money to the old country."

"You shouldn't worry yourself about that, Mawruss," Abe said confidently. "When a feller's got a contract with a privilege for renewal at two hundred dollars raise, like Henry got it, understand me, he ain't so stuck on going back to the old country. Two hundred dollars is a whole lot of money over there, Mawruss. For two hundred dollars in the old country a —— "

"Don't tell me again how much *Lockshen* mit holes in it a feller could buy in the old country, Abe," Morris interrupted. "There's elegant weather over there and good wine to drink, and places to go and look at which they got mountains twicet as high as the Catskills, with olives and grapes growing on to 'em."

"I was never crazy about olives, Mawruss."

"Me neither," Morris agreed, "but Henry is something else again, and the way that feller is talking to me in the cutting room yesterday, Abe, either he wouldn't be working for us three months from to-day or the steamers stops running to Italy."

"Mawruss," Abe shouted, at ten o'clock one morning in early March, "where was you?"

"Where was I?" Morris repeated. "I was to the court, that's where I was."

"To the court!" Abe exclaimed.

"That's what I said," Morris continued. "We fixed that sucker, me and Sholy and Doctor Eichendorfer and Baskof. We got him for a summons for this afternoon two o'clock he should go to the Jefferson Market Police Court. Till four o'clock this morning them people upstairs sits up hollering and *skiddering*. Minnie and me we couldn't sleep a wink, and Baskof neither. Steals our servant girl yet. I'll show that *Rosher*."

Abe glared indignantly at his partner.

"Do you mean to told me, Mawruss," he said, "that you are fooling away your time going on the court because somebody upstairs sings a little something last night?"

"Sings a little something!" Morris cried. "Why, that Italiener hollers Paliatzki till you would think he commits a murder up there."

"Suppose he did, Mawruss, ain't we got no business to go down here? Here we are rushed to death already, and you are fooling away your —— "

"Don't say that again, Abe," Morris broke in. "I guess I could take off a couple hours if I want to."

"Sure," Abe replied ironically, "and Henry takes off a couple of hours this lunchtime. He just told me so, Mawruss. He takes off a couple hours on account he is going downtown to draw some money out of the bank and buy his ticket."

"Buy his ticket!" Morris gasped.

"That's right," Abe continued, with forced calmness, "because, Mawruss, they wouldn't let no one travel on a steamer without buying a ticket. People what runs steamers is very funny that way, Mawruss."

Morris grew pale as he removed his coat and hat.

"What's he buying a steamer ticket for?" he asked.

"He didn't tell me exactly, Mawruss," Abe went on, "but I got a sort of an idee he's going back to Italy, Mawruss, and next time, Mawruss, when we

hire a designer, understand me, I would do it myself. Also, Mawruss, I would hire a designer which, if he goes back to the old country, y'understand, they would right away take him for a soldier, and then, Mawruss, we wouldn't got to be left without a designer just in the middle of the busy season."

"Did you talk to him, Abe?" Morris inquired timidly. "Maybe we could jolly him into staying."

Abe nodded again.

"Maybe you could jolly a duck not to swim in the water, Mawruss," he cried bitterly.

"That's all right, Abe," Morris retorted. "A duck ain't got no use for a couple of hundred dollars bonus."

"A couple of hundred dollars bonus!" Abe yelled. "Do you mean to say you would offer that Italiener a bonus?"

"Sure; why not?" Morris asked. "Ain't he a good designer, Abe?"

"I don't care if he was the best designer in the world, Mawruss," Abe replied firmly. "Before I would give him a couple hundred dollars bonus, understand me, he could go to Italy and a whole lot farther too."

"Suit yourself," Morris said, as he commenced to examine the morning's mail. He was midway in the assortment of the firm's sample line when Abe approached him half an hour later.

"Mawruss," he said, "do me the favour. You

speak to the feller and see what you can do. After all, a couple hundred dollars wouldn't break us."

"I'm satisfied," Morris replied, and he walked immediately to the cutting room.

"What's the matter, Henry, I hear you are leaving us?" he began.

Henry straightened up from the layer of cloth that was spread before him on the cutting table and passed one hand through his bushy black hair.

"I gotta no keek, Mr. Perlmutter," he said. "Just for my contract is up, so I go. That's all. I like-a da job first-class. Mr. Potash ees ver' good man. Mr. Perlmutter ees too."

"Then why don't you stay with us?" Morris asked, and Enrico Simonetti heaved a great sigh.

"I like-a da job first-class, Mr. Perlmutter, I gotta no keek," he declared; "but I can no work. I am seek."

"Sick!" Morris exclaimed; "well, why didn't you tell us then? We'd only be too glad to let you go away for a couple of weeks, Henry."

Enrico sighed even more deeply.

"Ees not a seekness for two weeks, Mr. Perlmutter," he said. "I am seek just for see my mudder. Ees old woman — my mudder, Mr. Perlmutter."

Enrico's large brown eyes grew moist as he proceeded.

"Yes, I am a-seek," he went on. "I am a-seek just for see Ischia, Posilipo, Capri, Mr. Perlmutter.

You know I am a-seek for see *aranci*—oranges grown on a tree. I am a-seek just for see my own ceet-a, Napoli. Yes, Mr. Perlmutter, I am a-ver' seek."

He sat down on a stool and bowed his face in his hands, while his shoulders heaved up and down in the emotion of nostalgia.

"Think it over, Henry," Morris said huskily, and departed on tiptoe. He returned at once to the assorting of the sample line, nor did he look up when Abe came toward him a few minutes afterward.

"Well, Mawruss," Abe said, "what did he say?"

"He didn't say nothing," Morris replied.

"Why not?" Abe continued. "Didn't he think two hundred was enough?"

"I didn't mention the two hundred to him at all," Morris answered, "because it wouldn't be no use. You couldn't keep that feller from going back to the old country, not if you would put him into jail even. He'd break out, Abe, believe me."

Abe nodded slowly.

"Well, that's the way it goes, Mawruss," he said bitterly, as Enrico walked toward them from the cutting room.

"Mr. Potash," he said, "ascuse me, you geev-a me now leetla time for going downtown just for same like I tell-a you dis morning?"

"Go ahead, Henry," Morris replied.

"You notta mad at me, Mr. Perlmutter?" Enrico asked anxiously.

"Why should I got to be mad at you, Henry?" Morris rejoined. "If I would feel the way you do, Henry, me, I wouldn't of waited for my contract to be up even."

"Ain't that a fine way for you to talk, Mawruss?" Abe said after Enrico had gone. "You would think you would be glad to get rid of the feller right in the middle of the busy season."

Morris shrugged.

"I don't care if I would got to jump right in and work till twelve o'clock every night, Abe," he declared. "I would tell him to go home to the old country if I would got to pay for the ticket myself."

Abe thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and started to walk gloomily away.

"Furthermore, Abe, if you want to go out for your lunch, Abe," Morris concluded, "now is the time, because as I told you before, Abe, I got to go on the court at two o'clock."

"Sure you told me that before, Mawruss," Abe growled, as he put on his hat and coat; "and when a feller goes to work and deliberately fixes things so he has got to go on a court, Mawruss, d'ye know the next place he would go?"

He paused for a retort; but, as Morris made no sign, Abe supplied his own answer.

"A lunatic asylum," he said, and a minute later the elevator door clanged behind him.

For almost an hour longer Morris busied himself

with the assortment of the sample line, and he had about concluded his task when a great wailing noise came from the cutting room. He jumped to his feet and ran hurriedly to the scene of the uproar. There he found Enrico Simonetti seated on a stool, clutching his hair with both hands, while around him stood a group of his assistants, voicing their anguish like a pack of foxhounds.

"*Koosh!*" Morris cried. "What is the trouble here?"

The wailing ceased, but Enrico remained seated, his hands still clutching his bushy hair, while his large brown eyes stared blankly from a face as white as a pierrot.

"What's the matter?" Morris repeated.

"His bank busted on him," said Nathan Schenkman, the shipping clerk.

"His bank!" Morris cried. "What bank?"

"It ain't a regular bank," Nathan explained. "He is giving his money to an Italiener which he calls himself a banker, Mr. Perlmutter; and to-day when he is going there to get him money the feller's store is locked. Nobody knows where he went to at all. The clerks also is gone."

"Is that right, Henry?" Morris asked.

Enrico nodded his head without removing his hands from his hair.

"There is a big crowd of loafers around the store," Nathan continued, "which they are saying

they would kill the feller if they get him, so Henry comes back here on account he ain't that kind, Mr. Perlmutter. Henry is a decent feller, Mr. Perlmutter."

Morris looked pityingly at his cutter, who continued to stare at the floor in stony despair.

"Might you could do something to get him his money back maybe, Mr. Perlmutter?" Nathan said.

"I would see when my partner comes in from lunch," Morris replied, and as he turned to leave the cutting room Abe's bulky form blocked the doorway. Morris waved him back, and Abe tiptoed to the front of the showroom followed by Morris.

"What's the trouble?" Abe asked immediately.

"Trouble enough," Morris declared. "Henry's bank busted on him."

"What!" Abe cried, and Morris repeated the information.

"Then he wouldn't leave us at all," Abe said, and Morris nodded sadly.

"Ain't it terrible?" he commented.

"Terrible?" Abe asked. "What d'ye mean — terrible? Is it so terrible that we wouldn't got to lose our designer right in the middle of the busy season?"

"I don't mean us, Abe," Morris said. "I mean for Henry."

"Henry neither," Abe rejoined. "Henry would still got his job with two hundred dollars a year raise."

"And a bonus of two hundred dollars," Morris added.

"A bonus of nothing!" Abe almost shouted. "Do you mean to told me you would pay Henry a bonus of two hundred dollars now that he must got to stay on with us?"

"I sure do," Morris declared fiercely; "and furthermore, Abe, if you don't want to pay it I would from my own pocket, and I'm going right in to tell him about it now."

He walked away to the cutting room, and in less than five minutes Abe repented his parsimony. He went on tiptoe to the door of the cutting room, where Morris leaned over Enrico, uttering words of consolation and advice.

"Mawruss," Abe hissed, "make it three hundred, the bonus."

Morris nodded.

"And, Mawruss," Abe went on, "it's pretty near quarter of two. Ain't you going up there at all?"

"I should never walk another step if you didn't say two o'clock," Morris Perlmutter protested to Philip Sholy as they hastened up the stairway in Jefferson Market Police Court.

"Never mind what I said," Sholy cried. "It's now anyhow quarter past two, and that dago has got his wife and servant girl and two clerks waiting

in court since twelve o'clock. Eichendorfer and Baskof have been here since one o'clock."

"Say, listen here, Sholy," Morris said, as they panted up the last flight, "I came just as soon as I could, and I couldn't come no sooner."

"Hats off!" the policeman at the door shouted, as Morris walked up the aisle with his attorney, and a moment later they passed into the enclosure for counsel.

"My client and his witnesses have been here since twelve o'clock," a lawyer was explaining while Morris sat down, "and in the meantime his place of business has been closed."

At this juncture the client in question caught sight of Morris and ripped out so strong an Italian expletive that the court interpreter nearly swooned.

"What business is he in?" the magistrate asked.

"He's in the banking business on Mulberry Street," the lawyer continued, "and it's impossible to say what harm all this may do him."

"Call the case again," the magistrate said.

"Witnesses in the case of Giuseppe Caraccioli please step forward," the interpreter announced, and the policeman in the rear of the courtroom repeated the injunction to the loungers in the stairway.

"Guy-seppy Scratch-oly, he bellowed," and Morris heard him from his seat in the enclosure for counsel. He jumped to his feet and made for the gate.

"Where are you going?" Sholy demanded, grabbing him by the coat.

"Leggo my coat!" Morris cried, and the next moment he was taking the stairs three at a jump. Nor had his excitement abated when he burst into his cutting room half an hour later.

"Henry," he gasped, "if I would get your money back for you would you stick out the busy season for us?"

Enrico was chalking designs on a piece of pattern paper when Morris entered. Beyond a slight pallor he appeared to be quite resigned to his loss, but at his employer's words he flushed vividly and clutched again at his hair.

"Leave your hair alone and listen to me," Morris commented.

"Sure, sure," Enrico said tremulously, "I leesten, Mr. Perlmutt."

"Did you hear what I said?" Morris went on. "If I can get your money back for you will you stay on here till the busy season is over?"

"Sure," Enrico cried; "sure. I notta geevadam how long I stay, you getta my mon', Mr. Perlmutt. I stay here one, two, t'ree years."

"All right," Morris said; "put on your coat and go back to Mulberry Street. Your banker will of opened up again bv the time you get there."

Ten days afterward Abe and Morris sat in the showroom.

"T'phoee!" Morris exclaimed. "Ever since that Italiener gets his money back he's all the time hollering."

Strains of the prologue to Pagliacci in Enrico's throaty barytone came from the cutting room, and Abe smiled.

"You couldn't blame him for being happy, could you?" he said.

"Sure I couldn't," Morris agreed, "but I wish he wouldn't holler the same tune all the time. That's that Paliatzki which them Italieners is always hollering."

"By the way, Mawruss," Abe asked, "what became of them Italieners?"

"They moved out," Morris said.

"That was a crazy thing you done, Mawruss, when you went on the court that time," Abe commented. "In the first place you wasted a whole lot of time, and in the second place that Italiener could have been murdered already when his depositors found his bank closed."

"Sure I know," Morris said, "and on the head of it all, Abe, the judge dismissed the complaint. So what does that feller Scratch-oly do, Abe, but turn around and sue for false arresting."

"Sues you?" Abe exclaimed.

"What are you talking about?" Morris cried. "I ain't got nothing to do with it. The whole thing got started by this here lawyer by the name

Sholy, which he wanted to make a little money. So I says I am willing to pay my share, but I wouldn't sign no complaints. I know them false arrestings from old times already."

"Who did sign the complaint?" Abe inquired.

"Doctor Eichendorfer and Henry Baskof," Morris answered, "and the way them fellers looks at me now, Abe, you would think I done 'em something."

"And how about Sholy?" Abe asked.

"Sholy acts like he would be my friend for life," Morris replied. "He's handling the false arresting case for them fellers, Abe, and they already paid him a hundred dollars detainer."

"It's an ill wind that don't blow a lawyer any good," remarked Abe.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MAN PROPOSES

"AIN'T it terrible a strong, healthy young feller should go off like that?" Abe Potash remarked, as he and his partner sat in their showroom one spring morning. "I give you my word I was sitting over in Hammersmith's so close to him as I am to you, Mawruss, when it happened."

"Was there much excitement?" Morris asked.

"I bet yer was there excitement!" Abe exclaimed. "Hammersmith sends across the street for a doctor, and you ought to seen Leon Sammet the way he acted. 'For Gawd's sake, doctor,' he says, 'couldn't you do nothing for him?' he says. 'He's got a wife and family,' he says, 'and we shipped him two thousand dollars goods only last Saturday.'"

"Did they?" Morris asked.

"How should I know?" Abe said. "Sammet is such a liar, Mawruss, he couldn't tell the truth no matter how surprised he would be. But one thing is sure, Mawruss — Gladstein did owe Sammet Brothers for a big bill of goods and the widder paid them out of the insurance."

"Could she do that when the feller leaves a family, Abe?" Morris inquired.

"The feller didn't leave no family, Mawruss," Abe answered. "Leon Sammet just takes a chance when he said that to the doctor. As a matter of fact, Mawruss, Gladstein was one of them fellers which he ain't got a relation in the world. Mrs. Gladstein neither, except *im* Russland. That's the way it goes, Mawruss. A feller which he has got so many cousins and uncles that he gets writer's cramp already indorsing accommodation paper for 'em, understand me, lives to be an old man yet, and all the time his relations and his wife's relations is piling up on him; while a man like Gladstein which you could really say has a chance to enjoy life, Mawruss, is got to die."

Morris nodded.

"Don't I know it?" he commented. "And I suppose the widder sells out the store."

"*Oser* a *stück*," Abe said. "She's still running the store, and making a fair success of it too."

"Is that so?" Morris replied. "Well, then, why couldn't we get some of her trade, Abe? Bridgetown ain't so far away from here. Why don't you take a run over there sometime and see what you could do with her? Might you could sell her some goods maybe."

"Yow!" Abe exclaimed derisively. "We couldn't sell that woman goods, not if we was to let her have

'em for the price of the findings, Mawruss. She's got an idee that she is getting stuck unless she would buy goods from the same concerns that sold Gladstein."

"Well, if that's the case, Abe," Morris said, "she could never make no big success there. A feller like Leon Sammet would just as lief stick a widder as not — liefer even."

"Sure, I know," Abe replied.

"Then why don't some one give her a couple pointers about that feller, Abe?" Morris inquired.

Abe nodded solemnly.

"You know a whole lot about women, Mawruss, I must say," he commented. "You could give a woman pointers by the dozen about a man, Mawruss, and swear to 'em with six affidavits yet, and what good would it do? It's like putting a 'Wet Paint' sign up. Everybody feels the paint to see if it really would be wet."

"What for a looking woman is she, Abe?" Morris asked, with an obvious effort at nonchalance.

"How should I know?" Abe said. "I only seen her a couple times; and anyhow, Mawruss, I don't take it so particular to look at women like Leon Sammet does, Mawruss. That feller's a regular Don Quicks-toe, Mawruss. He is all the time running around with women."

"A feller must got to entertain buyers once in a while, Abe," Morris said.

"Buyers is all right, Mawruss," Abe declared, "but I guess I been in this here business long enough that I could tell a buyer from a model."

"That's all right, Abe," Morris said. "Leon Sammet may run around the streets with women, Abe, but that ain't saying he is got intentions to marry Mrs. Gladstein. A feller like Leon Sammet which he is crowding fifty pretty close, Abe, ain't looking to marry no widders. Young girls is all them fellers is looking out for, Abe; and anyhow, Abe, what for a match is Mrs. Gladstein to a manufacturer? If she expects that she should get another husband, Abe, the only hope for her is some retailer would marry her as a going concern. She couldn't liquidate her business and come out even, let alone with money enough to get married, Abe."

"She don't got to got money to get married on, Mawruss," Abe rejoined. "Any one would be glad to marry such a woman supposing she didn't got a cent to her name. She's an elegant-looking woman, Mawruss — not too thin and not too fat, Mawruss, and what a face she got it, Mawruss! My Rosie was a good-looking woman, Mawruss, and is to-day yet; but Mrs. Gladstein, Mawruss, that's a woman which in a theayter already you don't see such a looking woman. She could dress herself, too, I bet yer. The last time I was by Bridgetown she is wearing one of our Style 4022 which Sammet *ganvered* from us and calls the Lily Langtry costume,

Mawruss, in a navy shade, understand me; and I don't know nothing about this here Lily Langtry, Mawruss, but I could tell you right now, Mawruss, she ain't got nothing on Mrs. Gladstein when it comes to looks."

Morris nodded and turned to the contemplation of some cutting-slips, while Abe made ready for lunch.

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," Morris said, when Abe appeared with his hat on. "I've been thinking about this here Mrs. Gladstein, understand me, and I come to the conclusion: Why should we give up so easy? Gladstein always done a good business in that store, y'understand, and if the widder is such a good-looking woman like you say she is, Abe, there's an opening for her to attract a big trade in gents' furnishings and hats up there, and at the same time keep the cloak-and-suit end going."

"What d'ye mean — attract a big trade in gents' furnishings and hats, Mawruss?" Abe demanded indignantly. "If you think the woman is a flirt, Mawruss, you are making a big mistake."

"Must a woman got to be a flirt that she should sell gents' furnishings, Abe?" Morris asked with some heat.

"That's all right, Mawruss," Abe said with a scowl. "A lady ain't looking to sell the gents' furnishing trade, Mawruss."

"I know she ain't," Morris replied, "but if a

woman is good-looking, Abe, naturally she attracts the clothing and furnishing customers, but she don't got to sell those customers, Abe. Her husband could do that."

"Her husband could do it?" Abe repeated. "What are you talking about — her husband?"

"Sure, her husband," Morris went on, "and especially if a good-looking woman like Mrs. Gladstein would got for a husband a good-looking man like B. Gurin, understand me, the idee works both ways. Mrs. Gladstein attracts the clothing trade and B. Gurin sells 'em, y'understand, while B. Gurin attracts the women's garment trade and Mrs. Gladstein sells 'em."

Abe sat down suddenly and took off his hat.

"What are you trying to drive into, Mawruss?" he asked.

"I am trying to drive into this, Abe," Morris replied: "B. Gurin is a good-looking, up-to-date feller, but he's in wrong with that store of his in Mount Vernon. In the first place, the neighbourhood ain't right, y'understand, and in the second place Gurin don't attend to business like he should; because he ain't married and he ain't got no responsibilities. To such a feller, Abe, when it comes to taking a young lady on theayter Saturday night, business is nix, even when Saturday is a big night in Mount Vernon."

Abe nodded.

"Furthermore, Abe," Morris continued, "if we go on selling B. Gurin, Abe, sooner or later he would bust up on us, understand me, and we are not only out a customer but the least he sticks us is a couple hundred dollars. He owes us two hundred and fifty right now, Abe, since the first of the month already. Ain't it?"

Abe nodded again.

"But you take a young feller like B. Gurin, Abe," Morris went on, "which all he needs is a wife to steady him and an up-to-date *Medeena* like Bridgetown to run a store in, understand me, and if we could put this thing through, Abe, not only we are doing a *Mitzvah* for all concerned, Abe, but we are making a customer for life."

"You mean, Mawruss," Abe said slowly, "you would try to make up a match between B. Gurin and Mrs. Gladstein?"

"Sure, why not?" Morris said. "It stands in the *Gemara*, Abe, we are commanded to promote marriages, visit the sick and bury the dead."

Once more Abe nodded, and this time he managed to impart the quality of irony to the gesture.

"Burying the dead is all right, Mawruss," he said. "From a dead man you don't get no comebacks, and his relations is anyhow grateful; *aber* if you would make up a match between a couple of people like Mrs. Gladstein and B. Gurin, what is it? Even if the marriage would be a success,

Mawruss, then the couple claims they was just suited to each other, Mawruss, and we don't get no credit for it anyway. On the other hand, Mawruss, if they don't agree together, they wouldn't hate each other near so much as they'd hate us."

"Why should they hate us?" Morris asked. "Our intentions is anyhow good."

"Sure, I know, Mawruss," Abe retorted. "From having good intentions already, many a decent, respectable feller goes broke."

Morris flapped the air impatiently with his right hand.

"Anybody could sit down and talk proverbs, Abe," he said.

"I guess I could talk proverbs in my own store, Mawruss, if I want to," Abe rejoined with dignity.

"Sure you could," Morris replied, "but one thing you got to remember, Abe. While the back-number is saying look out before you jump, the up-to-date feller has jumped already, and lands on a five-thousand-dollar order *mit* both feet already."

"I'll tell you, Mr. Perlmutter, it's like this," B. Gurin explained, as he sat in his Mount Vernon store that evening; "money don't figure at all with me."

"Where is the harm supposing she does got a little money, Gurin?" Morris protested. "And, anyhow,

never mind the money, Gurin. We will say for the sake of example she ain't got no money. Does it do any harm to look at the woman?"

B. Gurin passed his hand through his wavy brown hair, cut semi-pompadour in the latest fashion. There was no denying B. Gurin's claims to beauty.

"What is the use talking, Mr. Perlmutter?" he said, carefully examining his finger-nails. "I am sick and tired of looking at 'em. Believe me I ain't lying to you, if I looked at one I must of looked at hundreds. The fathers was rated at the very least D to F first credit, and what is it? The most of 'em I wouldn't marry, not if the rating was Aa 1 even, such faces they got it, understand me; and the others which is got the looks, y'understand, you could take it from me, Mr. Perlmutter, they couldn't even cook a pertater even."

"Girls which they got D to F fathers don't got to cook pertaters," Morris commented shortly.

B. Gurin shrugged.

"For that matter, Mr. Perlmutter," he said, "I don't take it so particular about my food neither."

"Say, lookyhere, Gurin," Morris exclaimed. "What is the trouble with you anyhow? First you are telling me you don't care about money, next you are kicking that the good-looking ones couldn't cook, y'understand, and then you say you

ain't so particular about cooking anyway. What for a kind of girl do you want, Gurin?"

Gurin continued to examine his finger-nails and made no reply.

"Because, Gurin," Morris concluded, "if you are looking for a homely girl which she ain't got no money and couldn't cook, understand me, I wouldn't fool away my time with you at all. Such girls you don't need me to find for you."

B. Gurin sighed profoundly.

"You shouldn't get mad, Mr. Perlmutter," he said, "if I tell you something?"

"Why should I get mad, Gurin?" Morris asked. "I am coming all the way up here, which I am leaving wife and boy at home to do so — and maybe you don't think she put up a holler, Gurin! So if you wouldn't even consent to do me the favour and look at Mrs. Gladstein, Gurin, and I don't get mad, understand me, why should I get mad if you would tell me something?"

"Well," Gurin commenced, "it ain't much to tell, Mr. Perlmutter. I guess you hear already why I am coming to this country."

Morris elevated his eyebrows.

"I suppose you are coming here like anybody else comes here," he said. "Sooner as stay in the old country and be a *Schnorrer* all your life, you come over here, ain't it?"

"No, siree, sir," Gurin replied emphatically.

"If I would stay in the old country, Perlmutter, I don't got to be a *Schnorrer*. Do you know Louis Moses, the banker in Minsk?"

Morris nodded.

"That's from *mir* an uncle, *verstehst du?*" Gurin said; "and Zachs, the big corn merchant, that's also an uncle. My father ain't a *Schnorrer* neither, Mr. Perlmutter; in fact, instead I am sending home money to Russland like most fellers which they come to this country, Mr. Perlmutter, my people sends me money yet."

He jumped from his chair and went to the safe, from which he extracted two crisp Russian bank-notes.

"A hundred rubles apiece," he said, and his face beamed with pride. "So, you see, I don't got to leave Russland because I would be a *Schnorrer* over there."

"No?" Morris replied. "Then why did you leave, Gurin? So far what I could see you ain't made it such a big successs over here."

"You couldn't make me mad by saying that, Mr. Perlmutter," Gurin commented. "A big success *oder* a big failure, it makes no difference to me."

"It makes a whole lot of difference to me," Morris cried.

"Yes, Mr. Perlmutter," B. Gurin went on, disregarding the interruption. "I ain't coming over

here to make a big success in business. I am coming over here to forget."

"To forget!" Morris exclaimed. "What d'ye mean, forget?"

B. Gurin ran his hands once more through his pompadour and nodded slowly.

"That's what I said," he repeated — "to forget."

"Well, I hope you ain't forgetting you owe us now two hundred and fifty dollars since the first of the month yet," Morris commented in dry, matter-of-fact tones.

B. Gurin waved his hand airily.

"I could forget that easy, Mr. Perlmutter," he said — and Morris winced — "but the rest I couldn't forget at all. Day and night I see her face, Mr. Perlmutter — and such a face!"

Here he paused impressively.

"N-nah!" he exclaimed, and kissed the tips of his fingers, while Morris glanced uneasily toward the door.

" Her name was Miss Polanya and her father keeps a big flour mill in Koroleshtchevitzi, Mr. Perlmutter," Gurin went on. "A fine family, understand me; and I am going out there from Minsk twice a week, when a young feller by the name Lutsky — a corn broker, y'understand — comes to sell her father goods."

Again B. Gurin paused, his left hand extended palm upward in a tremulous gesture. Suddenly it dropped on his knee with a despondent smack.

"In two weeks already they was married," he concluded, "and me, I am coming to America."

"You ain't coming to such a bad place neither," Morris rejoined; "even supposing your uncles was such big *Machers* in the old country."

"Places is all the same to me now," Gurin said — "women, too, Mr. Perlmutter. I assure you, Mr. Perlmutter, since the day I am leaving Minsk one woman is the same as another to me. I ain't got no use for none of 'em."

"*Geh weg*, Gurin," Morris cried impatiently. "You talk like a fool. Just because one lady goes back on you, understand me, is that a reason you wouldn't got no use for no ladies at all? You might just as well say, Gurin, because one customer busts up on you, y'understand, you would never try to sell another customer so long as you live. Now this here Mrs. Gladstein, Gurin, is a lady which while I never seen this here lady *im* Russland, y'understand, if you will just come out to Bridgetown with me, Gurin, I give you a guaranty Russland wouldn't figure at all."

Gurin shook his head sadly.

"You don't know me, Mr. Perlmutter," he said. "While I am going with plenty *Schatchens* to see young ladies already, Mr. Perlmutter, I assure you my heart ain't in it. People gets the impression because I am a swell dresser, Mr. Perlmutter, that I am looking to get married; but believe me, Mr. Perlmutter, it ain't so."

"Then what do you go for, Gurin?" Morris

asked. "*Schatchens* don't like to fool away their time no more as I do, Gurin; and you could take it from me, no girl is going to the trouble to fix herself up and make a nice supper for you and the *Schatchen* simply for the pleasure of seeing a swell dresser, Gurin."

"That's just the point, Mr. Perlmutter," Gurin said. "A feller which runs a store like this one and eats his meals in restaurants, understand me, must got to get a little home cooking once in a while. Ain't it?"

"Why not get married and be done with it?" Morris retorted; "and then you could get home cooking all the time."

Once more Gurin shook his head.

"Without love, Mr. Perlmutter, marriage is nix," he said.

"*Schmooes!*" Morris exclaimed. "Do you think when I got married I loved my wife, Gurin? *Oser* a *stück*. And to-day yet I am crazy about her. With a business man, Gurin, love comes after marriage."

B. Gurin rose wearily to his feet and shot his cuffs by way of showing impatience.

"What is the use talking, Mr. Perlmutter?" he protested. "When I want to get married I would get married — otherwise not."

He flecked away an imaginary grain of dust from the lapel of his coat and walked slowly toward the door.

"Are you going home on the New Haven road *oder* the Harlem road?" he asked.

Morris scowled, and his indignation lent such force to the gesture with which he put on his hat that the impact sounded like a blow on a tambourine.

"*Schon gut*, Gurin," he said. "I am through with you."

He paused at the doorway and lit a cigar.

"And one thing I could tell you, Gurin," he concluded. "Either you would send us a check the first thing to-morrow morning, *oder* we would give your account to our lawyers, and that's all there is to it."

He puffed away at his cigar as he trudged down the street, and he had nearly reached the corner when he heard a familiar voice shouting: "Mr. Perlmutter!" He turned to view B. Gurin hastening after him.

"Well, Gurin," he grunted, "what you want now?"

Gurin stopped and gasped for breath, and Morris's heart gave a triumphant leap as he noted the anxiety displayed on B. Gurin's clean-shaven features.

"Speak up, Gurin," he said; "I got to get my train."

Gurin smiled in surrender.

"All right, Mr. Perlmutter," he murmured; "make for me a date and I will look the lady over."

When Morris entered his place of business the

next morning he found his partner examining the advertising columns of a morning paper with an absorption hardly justified by the tabulated list of births, marriages and deaths at which he was gazing.

"What's biting you now, Abe?" Morris demanded.

"What d'ye mean, what's biting me?" Abe rejoined, and Morris blushed in the consciousness of his oversleeping that morning by more than half an hour.

"Say, lookyhere, Abe," he cried. "I don't know what you are driving into, understand me, but if you think you could get *brogus* at me just because I am ten minutes late once in a while, y'understand, let me tell you I am catching a twelve'o'clock train from Mount Vernon last night, and not alone I am talking myself blue in the face to that feller Gurin, y'understand, but when I got home already I couldn't get to sleep till I told the whole thing to my Minnie yet."

Abe nodded slowly.

"Yes, Abe," Morris continued, "I got to go over the story twice over already, and even then, y'understand, my Minnie gets mad because I didn't contradict myself.

"Only one idee that woman got it in her head, Abe. If I am out of the house *schon* ten minutes already you couldn't tell her otherwise but I am playing auction pinocle."

"Well, you might just as well of been playing auction pinocle last night for all the good it would do us."

"What are you talking about — all the good it would do us?" Morris almost whimpered. "I actually got the feller dead to rights, Abe, and all I must do now is to work from the other end."

Abe burst into a mirthless laugh and handed Morris the paper.

"You should of worked the other end first, Mawruss," he declared, as he indicated an advertising item with his thumb. "That's what Leon Sammet did, Mawruss."

Morris seized the paper and his face grew purple as he read the following notice:

ENGAGED: Asimof — Gladstein. Mrs. Sonia Gladstein, of Bridgetown, Pa., to Jacob Asimof, of Dotyville, Pa. At home, Sunday next 3 to 7 at the residence of Mrs. Leah Sammet, 86¾ West One Hundredth and Eighteenth Street. No cards.

"Leon's mother makes the engagement party for 'em, Mawruss," Abe said dryly. "Costs a whole lot of money, too, and I bet yer Mrs. Gladstein wouldn't notice it at all in the next six months' statements Leon sends to her."

Morris stifled a groan as he laid down the paper and forced himself to smile confidently.

"What difference does an engagement make, Abe?" he asked. "An engagement ain't a wedding, Abe, and it ain't too late even now."

Again Abe indulged in a bitter laugh.

"You're a regular optician, Mawruss," he said. "You never give up hope."

"That's all right, Abe," Morris retorted. "We could stand a couple opticians in this concern. Always you are ready to lay down on a proposition just as soon as things goes a little wrong, understand me, but me I think differencely."

Abe shrugged and rose to his feet.

"Well, Mawruss," he said, "take off your hat and coat and stay a while. Maybe we could do a little business here this morning for a change."

"Maybe we could and maybe we couldn't, Abe," Morris rejoined, as he buttoned up his coat; "but just the same I am going to do something which you will really be surprised."

"Not at all," Abe corrected; "we are partners together so long that I am only surprised supposing you should act sensible."

"Well, the way I look at it I am acting sensible, Abe," Morris announced. "I am acting sensible, because I am going right down to see Marcus Flachs and I would buy from him for ten dollars cut glass, and I would show that sucker Sammet he couldn't faze me none."

"What d'ye mean, couldn't faze you none?" Abe asked.

"I mean if Sammet is such a faker he goes to work and makes engagement parties for his customers

and puts 'em on the paper yet, Abe," Morris declared, as he jammed his hat down more firmly on his head, "he must got to expect his competitors would take advantage of it, understand me. And you could bet your sweet life, Abe, Sunday afternoon, comes three o'clock, I am right there at his mother's house with the cut glass, and don't you forget it."

Abe nodded grimly.

"It's a free country, Mawruss," he said, "and nobody could stop you going to an engagement party which is in the paper, y'understand; but you shouldn't forget one thing, Mawruss. You got on our ledger a drawing account, *verstehst du*, and on your way out you should please tell Miss Cohen to enter the ten dollars cut glass in the right place."

"Don't worry, Abe," Morris cried, as he started for the elevator. "When the time comes we should post it in the ledger, if we ain't opened a new account in Bridgetown, Pa., I would pay for it myself."

Ten minutes later he entered the Twenty-third Street subway station en route to Canal Street, and no sooner had he bought his ticket than his enthusiasm began to wane. After all, he reflected as he boarded the train, ten dollars' worth of cut glass seemed rather extravagant when one considered the size of an order that in the most favourable circumstances might emanate from a store in Bridgetown. Indeed, as the train pulled into the

Eighteenth Street station he had come to believe that seven dollars and fifty cents would be a generous price, and even this figure commenced to look huge as Fourteenth Street drew near. At Astor Place, Morris decided that five dollars' worth of cut glass would be more appropriate for a widow. When the guard announced the next stop as Bleecker Street, however, it occurred to Morris that the manufacturers of quadruple plate were producing some very artistic effects in knives, forks and spoons, which in appearance were undistinguishable from sterling silver; and the train was leaving Spring Street when Morris bethought himself of a certain *bonbonnière* that had cost Mrs. Perlmutter precisely four dollars at a dry-goods store. He distinctly recalled examining the trade-mark, to which were affixed the words "triple plate."

During the short walk from the Canal Street station to Marcus Flachs's place of business, he wondered vaguely if there were such a thing as double plate, and when at last he opened the door of the pawnbroker's sales store in question he approached the counter with his mind fully made up.

"Do you got maybe some sets from nutpicks?" he inquired of the proprietor.

Marcus Flachs took the question in ill part.

"What the devil do you think I am running here," he demanded by way of answer — "a five-and-ten-cent store?"

"Since when do they sell it nutpicks in a five-and-ten-cent-store?" Morris retorted.

Flachs snorted angrily.

"I don't think they sell 'em even in five-and-ten-cent stores," he said; "and anyhow, Mr. Perlmutter, what for a present is nutpicks? If a feller eats nuts twice a year, that's a big average. For my part it would *oser* break my heart if I would never eat another nut so long as I live. Now what you want to get is something cheap, ain't it?"

Morris nodded.

"Something about two dollars and fifty cents," he said.

"That's what I thought," Flachs replied, "and for two dollars and fifty cents there ain't much choice. Olive dishes is all I could show you."

"Let me give a look at 'em," Morris said, and as Flachs led the way to the well-stocked shelves in the rear of the store Morris discerned for the first time the presence of another customer.

"How much did you say that there coffee samovar was?" cried a familiar voice.

"I told you before, Mr. Klinger," Flachs said, "that ain't no samovar. That's a perculater and it cost me, so sure as I am standing here, fifteen dollars, so I would let you have it for twelve-fifty on account its being shopworn."

"Take ten dollars and make an end," rejoined Klinger, tendering a bill.

"For ten dollars I could give you a fine piece cut glass, Mr. Klinger," Flachs insisted.

By way of answer Klinger tucked away the ten-dollar bill he had taken from his waistcoat pocket, and Flachs seized the coffee percolator with both hands.

"I'll wrap it up for you right away," he said, and then it was that Klinger recognized Morris, who had been standing unnoticed in the background.

"Hello, Perlmutter!" he said; "what are you doing here?"

"I guess I am doing the same what you are doing, Klinger," Morris replied stiffly. "I am buying for a customer a present. Ain't it?"

Klinger nodded,

"Honestly, Perlmutter," he said, "I never seen the like how things happen. No sooner you start to sell goods to a feller than somebody is engaged *oder* married in his family."

"He must be a pretty good customer the way you are blowing yourself," Morris commented.

"I bet yer!" Klinger said as he walked away; "and if you would be in our place you would do the same."

For five minutes Morris examined the cut glass, and when Flachs returned he had decided upon an olive dish of most intricate design. "That's a close buyer, that Mr. Klinger," Flachs observed.

"Not near so close as I am," Morris declared.

"Well, you wouldn't anyhow kick on paying twenty-five cents express, Mr. Perlmutter," Flachs said, "but that feller actually wants me to deliver the package for nothing."

"Why not?" Morris asked. "Don't everybody deliver packages free?"

"Not a pawnbroker's-sales store," Flachs replied; "and anyhow, Mr. Perlmutter, Leon Sammet this morning buys from me for thirty dollars silver to be sent to the same place on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street as that there perculater, and he didn't kick only a little that I am charging him fifty cents express."

"What!" Morris exclaimed. "Is Klinger sending that perculater up to One Hundred and Eighteenth Street too?"

"That's what I said," Flachs answered, and Morris replaced the cut-glass dish on the shelf.

"Was the name Gladstein?" he inquired, and Flachs nodded.

"Then in that case," Morris said savagely, "let me look at some sterling silver for about twenty-five dollars. If them suckers could stand it, so can I."

More than two days had elapsed before Abe had exhausted the topic of Mrs. Gladstein's ten-dollar engagement present. He discussed it satirically, profanely and earnestly, from the standpoint of business ethics, in such maddening reiterations

that Morris could not help wondering how much longer Abe's criticism would have continued had he known that the cold-meat tray really cost twenty-five dollars.

"You are throwing away good money after bad, Mawruss," Abe said, renewing the subject after an interval of comparative calm, "because, so sure as you are standing there, we would never get our two hundred and fifty out of that feller Gurin."

"What has Mrs. Gladstein's present got to do with Gurin?" Morris asked. "If I told you once, Abe, in the last two days, I am telling you a dozen times, understand me, I am giving that there cold-meat tray to Mrs. Gladstein as a speculation, Abe. What difference does it make who she marries, Abe, Gurin *oder* Asimof, so long as we could land from her an order for five hundred dollars?"

"Yow! You would land from her an order for five hundred dollars!" Abe exclaimed.

"Well, if Sol Klinger could do it, why couldn't we?" Morris asked.

"What are you talking about Sol Klinger?" Abe demanded.

Thereupon Morris related to Abe the circumstances surrounding Sol Klinger's purchase of the coffee percolator, and when he concluded Abe nodded slowly.

"So that highwayman is butting in too," he commented. "How much did you say he is paying for that samovar, Mawruss?"

Morris closed his eyes as though he were making a conscientious effort to remember the exact amount.

"Thirty dollars," he announced at last.

"What!" Abe cried. "You stood there and let Sol Klinger buy for thirty dollars a present and we ourselves only spend ten? What for a piker are you anyway, Mawruss?"

"What do you mean, what for a piker am I?" Morris said indignantly. "You are talking me black in the face on account I am spending ten dollars and now you are kicking I didn't spend thirty."

"Did you tell me before that Sol Klinger buys a present?" Abe asked. "And furthermore, Mawruss, this wouldn't be the first time we are spending money to get business. Couldn't we afford to lay out thirty dollars if we want to?"

"But, Abe ——" Morris began.

"But nothing!" Abe roared. "Why should you get all of a sudden so *sparsam mit* our money, Mawruss? You talk like we would be new beginners on East Broadway already."

"But, Abe——" Morris protested again.

"'Senough, Mawruss," Abe interrupted. "I heard enough from you already. Only one thing I got to tell you: if we lose a chance of getting some business from a lady which you could really say I know her well enough that it's a shame we ain't

sold her nothing already even, don't blame me. That's all I got to say."

He walked away to the cutting room, while Morris sat down in the nearest chair, dazed to the point of temporary aphasia. For five minutes he sat still, endeavouring to trace the intricacies of a discussion that had put him so decisively in the wrong, and he was still pondering the matter when the elevator door opened and B. Gurin alighted.

"How do you do, Mr. Perlmutter?" Gurin cried.

Morris grunted inarticulately and made no at-attempt to take his visitor's proffered hand.

"Did you got any news for me?" Gurin asked.

Morris rose to his feet.

"Yes, I got some news for you," he said. "I got news for you that Mrs. Gladstein is engaged to be married to a feller by the name Asimof."

He looked absently at a sample rack upon which reposed the very newspaper that contained the advertisement.

"Here it is," he continued, as he seized the paper. "You could see for yourself."

He handed the advertisement to Gurin, who read it over unmoved.

"Well, I must tell you the honest truth, Mr. Perlmutter," he said. "I couldn't say I am sorry." And he smiled amiably.

As Morris gazed at the fashion-plate features and the fashion-plate apparel of his visitor, he entirely

forgot his optimistic scheme of supplanting Asimof with Gurin and he grew suddenly livid with a fierce rage.

"You ain't, ain't you?" he bellowed. "Well, you ought to be, because so sure as you are standing there, comes Monday morning and we don't get a check from you, we would close you up sure, y'understand."

"Now, lookyhere, Mr. Perlmutter —" Gurin began, but the reaction set up by Morris's encounter with his partner had begun to have its effect and he seized Gurin by one padded shoulder.

"Out!" he roared. "Out of my place, you rotten, cheap dude, you!"

And two minutes later B. Gurin fled wildly down the stairs, the newspaper still clutched in his hand.

Although Leon Sammet had at first been actuated by motives of a somewhat sordid nature in his negotiation of Mrs. Gladstein's betrothal, his subsequent behaviour was tempered by the traditional hospitality of his race. As for his mother, Mrs. Leah Sammet, she entered upon the preparations for the reception with an ardour that could not have been exceeded had Mrs. Gladstein been her own daughter. Thus, when Sunday afternoon arrived, Mrs. Sammet's house on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street presented an appearance of unusual festivity. The long, narrow parlor had been

liberally draped with smilax and sparingly decorated with ex-table-d'hôte roses, until it resembled the mortuary chapel of a Mulberry Street undertaker; and this effect was, if anything, heightened by four dozen camp-chairs that had been procured from the sexton of Mrs. Sammet's place of worship.

A fine odour of cooking ascended from the basement kitchen, and when Jacob Asimof had entered the front door at the behest of a coloured man with white gloves he sniffed the fragrant atmosphere of the lobby like a coon dog at the base of a hollow tree.

"Am I the first here?" he asked Barney Sammet, the junior partner of Sammet Brothers, who had been detailed by his elder brother to receive the arriving guests, with strict injunction to keep an eye on the cigars.

Barney nodded gloomily.

"And ain't Mrs. Gladstein — I mean Sonia — come yet?" Jacob inquired.

"We just now got a telephone from her, the train from Bridgetown is late and she would be here in half an hour," Barney replied.

"That's a fine lookout," Asimof commented. "I bet yer by that time we would got a big crowd here."

The words were prophetic, for the shuffling of many feet on the front stoop preluded the arrival of Sol Klinger, Mrs. Klinger, Moe Klein and Mrs. Klein, who were immediately succeeded by the firm

of Kleiman & Elenbogen, H. Rashkin, the coat-pad manufacturer, and Marks Pasinsky.

It must be conceded that Leon Sammet comported himself in a highly creditable manner, and he greeted his guests with a cordiality that embraced competitor and customer in one impartial, comprehensive smile.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Klinger?" he exclaimed, and then he turned to Mrs. Leah Sammet, who stood beside him. "Mommer," he said, "I want you to know Mr. Klinger. Him and me has been competitors for twenty years already."

Mrs. Sammet nodded and smiled.

"For my part twenty years longer," she murmured, as she grasped Sol's hand.

"At a time like this, Mrs. Sammet," Sol rejoined, "it don't make no difference to me if a man is ever so much a competitor; what I claim is, let a sleeping dawg alone."

Mrs. Sammet indorsed the sentiment with another smile, and Sol with his retinue passed on into the back parlour for the purpose of inspecting the presents. In the meantime other guests had preceded them, and among them was a man whose bearing and raiment proclaimed the creature of fashion. Not only were his trousers of the latest narrow design, but they were of sufficient modish brevity half to conceal and half to reveal a pair of gossamer silk socks, which in their turn were incased by

patent-leather, low-cut shoes. The latter exhibited the square knobbiness that only fashion artists can impart to the footgear of their models, while the broad laces that held them by the insecure hold of two eyelets were knotted in a bow that might have been appended to the collar of Mr. Paderewski himself.

"Ain't this Mr. Gurin?" Sol Klinger asked, and the creature of fashion nodded.

"You're a friend of the *Kahlo*, ain't it?" Klinger commented, employing the vernacular equivalent for the English word "bride."

"In a way," Gurin said evasively; "*aber* the *Khosan* I don't know at all."

Thus did Gurin imply that he was not acquainted with the future bridegroom, and Klinger volunteered the information that Asimof ran a dry-goods store in Dotyville, Pennsylvania.

"I sold him goods for years," he added, "and I guess I would continue to do so, even if that *Ganef* Sammet would make twenty engagement parties for 'em. Did you see the samovar I gave 'em?"

He pointed proudly to a silver-plated object, and Gurin glanced at it scornfully.

"Potash & Perlmutter gives 'em solid silver," he commented — "a wide dish."

"Sure I know," Klinger said, "thin like paper."

"*Aber* sterling," Gurin insisted, and Klinger made a telling diversion.

"I suppose you sent 'em something sterling also," he said.

"Me?" Gurin exclaimed. "Why should I buy presents? I am a retailer myself, Mr. Klinger, so I sent 'em some flowers."

"I don't see 'em nowhere," Sol retorted.

"They're over there," B. Gurin said, making a sweeping gesture in the general direction of the mantelpiece, and as he did so a bass voice sounded at his elbow.

"Put out my eye why don't you?" cried Abe Potash, and then he recognized his assailant.

"Say, what are you doing here?" he demanded.

B. Gurin looked coldly at his creditor and shrugged his shoulders.

"I got just so much right to be here as you," he said, "and that partner of yours too."

He hurled this defiance at Morris, who had entered the room on Abe's heels; but the retort passed unnoticed so far as Morris was concerned, since he was absorbed in the contemplation of the presents.

"Well, Klinger," he said, "you are making Mrs. Gladstein a pretty fine present, ain't it?"

Klinger scowled.

"Mrs. Gladstein I ain't bothering my head about at all," he replied. "But when a cut-throat like Sammet makes out a scheme to steal away from me an old customer like Asimof I got to protect myself."

Morris whistled expressively.

"So you are making the present to Asimof?" he commented.

"Sure, I am," Sol answered. "As for Mrs. Gladstein, she got presents enough from me. The first time she was married I am sending money to the old country to my father he should make her a present on account Mrs. Gladstein's father is my father's a third cousin, understand me. And when she marries Gladstein, y'understand, I give her both an engagement and a wedding present both. And do you think that sucker, *olav hasholom*, ever buys from me a dollar's worth goods? *Oser* a *Stück*."

"And you say Mrs. Gladstein was twicet married?" Morris asked.

"Ain't I just telling you so?" Sol replied.

"What was her first husband's name?" Morris asked; but the question remained unanswered, for at that very moment a confusion of noises in the front parlour signalled the arrival of the bride.

Morris and Sol followed the other guests from the rear parlour, and then it was that Morris discerned his partner's appreciative description of Mrs. Gladstein's claim to be in no way exaggerated. She was arrayed in a black silk dress of a design well calculated to display her graceful figure, while her oval face was shaded by a black picture hat, beneath which her large dark eyes glowed and flashed by turns.

Moreover, her complexion was all cream and roses, and when she smiled two rows of even white teeth were exposed between a pair of tantalizing red lips.

Morris commenced to perspire with embarrassment as he remembered how he had planned to negotiate a match for this glorious creature — a task that only a very prince of marriage brokers might have essayed. He turned away; but as his eye rested on B. Gurin, who still lingered over the presents, he was obliged to admit that he had chosen a fitting candidate, and he even felt mollified toward his delinquent customer as he reflected on Gurin's lost opportunity.

"Gurin," he said, "ain't you going to congradulate the *Kahlo?*"

"I didn't know she was here at all," Gurin said sadly. The truth was that Gurin's presence at the reception that afternoon was not inspired by curiosity concerning either Mrs. Gladstein or Asimof. Business was undeniably bad with him, and he was making an earnest effort to keep his financial head above water. Thus he limited his personal expenses to the preservation of his wardrobe, and he had cut down his cost of living to a degree that permitted only a very low, lunch-wagon diet. He saw in Mrs. Sammet's hospitality the prospect of a meal, and although he was by no means courageous, his appetite spurred him on to brave his creditors' wrath.

"I'll take a look at her," he murmured apologetically, and he began to elbow his way through the group that surrounded the engaged couple. Morris patted him on the shoulder as he passed and was about to return to the back parlour when a shriek came from the centre of the congratulatory throng.

"Boris!" cried a female voice with a note of hysteria in its shrill tones.

"Sonia!" B. Gurin exclaimed, and the next moment he clasped Mrs. Gladstein in his arms.

"You was asking me the name of Mrs. Gladstein's first husband," said Sol Klinger to Morris Perlmutter, as they descended the stoop together half an hour later. "It was Aaron Lutsky. He died two years after they was married. I knew his family well in the old country — her's too, Perlmutter. Her father was a feller by the name Polanya, and to-day yet he runs a big flour mill in Koroleshtchevitzi."

"So I understand," Morris said; "but what's that you got there under your coat?"

He referred to a huge bulge on the right side of Sol Klinger's Prince Albert coat, which Sol was supporting with both hands.

"That's my present," Sol said, as if surprised at the question, "and if Marcus Flachs wouldn't give me my money back, understand me, I could anyhow exchange it for something useful."

"It don't make no difference, Mawruss," Abe said, as they sat in their showroom two months later. "The feller should got to pay us that two hundred and fifty dollars."

"But we would get lots of business out of them now that they are married, Abe," Morris protested.

"Sure, I know, Mawruss, and they got lots of presents out of us too, Mawruss," Abe said. "Counting the engagement and the wedding present, Mawruss, and my Rosie's new dress, and the pants which you bought it to go with your tuxedo, understand me — first and last we must be out a hundred and fifty dollars."

Morris nodded. He recognized that an opportunity was here presented to correct Abe's figures by the addition of fifteen dollars to the price of the engagement present, but he deemed it more prudent to await the arrival of Gurin's first order. In point of fact, Morris had begun to examine the mails with some anxiety for a letter postmarked Bridgetown. More than two weeks had elapsed since Gurin's wedding, and, making due allowances for honeymooning, it seemed to Morris that from an inspection of Mrs. Gladstein's stock, made by him on a congratulatory visit to Bridgetown, there was immediate need for replenishment.

"I don't understand why we don't hear from them people at all," he said.

"Give 'em a show, Mawruss. Give 'em a show," Abe replied. "A man only gets married, for the first time, once."

Morris shrugged.

"For my part, Abe, I ain't in no hurry," he said. "If you could see the way Leon Sammet gives me a look this morning when I seen him on the subway y'understand, it would be worth to you a hundred and fifty dollars. Sol Klinger is feeling sore too, Abe. I seen him in Hammersmith's yesterday, and he says to me Flachs wouldn't exchange that samovar arrangement which he bought it, so he took it home with him, and he ain't drunk nothing but coffee in two months."

"I bet yer," Abe commented; "and he also ain't got an order from Asimof in two months. The feller is heartbroken, Mawruss. He even had made arrangements to sell his store in Dotyville and move over to Bridgetown, y'understand, and when he called the deal off the purchaser sues him for breach of contract yet."

"But why should he get mad at Klinger?" Morris asked. "Klinger didn't do him nothing."

"Maybe you don't think so, Mawruss, but Asimof figures differencely; because he told me this morning, that after the engagement is off, understand me, Mrs. Gladstein and him makes a division of the presents. Asimof takes what was sent by the concerns which is selling *him* goods, and Mrs. Gladstein

takes the rest, all excepting a present they got from Marks Pasinsky.

"Pasinsky used to sell 'em both goods, y'understand; but fortunately, Mawruss, he sends 'em a dozen coffee spoons, so Asimof takes six and Mrs. Gladstein takes six."

"It's a good thing Pasinsky didn't send 'em a single piece of cut glass," Morris said thoughtfully.

"It wouldn't make no difference to Asimof," Abe said. "He would of allowed Mrs. Gladstein half cost price, give or take. He's a pretty square feller, Asimof is, Mawruss, and he said he would give a look in here this afternoon. We needn't be afraid from him, Mawruss. He's A number one up to two hundred and fifty dollars, thirty days net."

Morris nodded again and walked slowly toward the cutting room, while his partner sat down to read the trade news in the *Daily Cloak and Suit Record*. Morris had hardly reached the doorway, however, when a strident shout caused him to retrace his steps in a hurry.

"What's the matter now?" he exclaimed; but Abe was incapable of articulate speech. Instead he held out the paper and made noises appropriate to an apopletic seizure, which Morris construed as a request to look at something of more than ordinary interest.

"Where, where?" he demanded, and Abe stuck

a trembling forefinger through the printed page. As nearly as the torn edges of the paper would permit, Morris read the following paragraph:

BRIDGETOWN, PA. — D. GLADSTEIN'S STORE CLOSED. The stock and fixtures of the general store conducted here by D. Gladstein, deceased, were closed out last week, and his widow, who recently married B. Gurin, sailed from New York with her husband yesterday for Hamburg. It is understood that they intend to reside permanently in Europe.

While Morris perused the item Abe gradually recovered his composure, and when his partner at last put down the paper Abe was able to smile the slow, ghostly smile of a man who has called four deuces with an ace full.

"Well, Mawruss," he said resignedly, "a feller must expect the worst when he's got an optician for a partner."

THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.